

13 HOURS OF **GAMEPLAY VIDEOS INSIDE**

**XBOX**



**40**

**UNMISSABLE  
NEW ACTION  
GAMES**

**WORLD EXCLUSIVE  
GOING BEYOND SKYRIM**

**HANDS-ON**

**MORTAL  
KOMBAT X**

WE PLAY THE  
LATEST ENTRY  
IN THE BRUTAL  
FIGHTING SERIES

# THE ELDER SCROLLS **ONLINE**

- FIRST XBOX ONE SCREENS INSIDE
- WE SPEAK TO ZENIMAX

**+ QUANTUM BREAK FABLE  
LEGENDS CRACKDOWN  
DOOM HALO 5 MASS EFFECT 4  
FINAL FANTASY XV GEARS OF  
WAR METAL GEAR SOLID V**

**TOMB RAIDER**

**LARA'S DEADLIEST ADVENTURE YET**

**HOLOLENS: THE  
FUTURE OF GAMING**



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# Welcome to **XONE**



If there's one thing the Xbox is known for, it's its selection of incredible action games that have graced the disc trays of each console over the years. From *Halo* to *Assassin's Creed*, *Batman* to *Destiny*, we've seen a lot of

incredible titles on Microsoft's box of wonders.

If, like me, you love explosions, guns and people shouting while lobbing grenades across your screen, you're going to be pretty chuffed with our complete guide to the biggest action games hitting the Xbox One. We also went hands-on with classic blood-fest *Mortal Kombat*, and came away shouting 'FINISH HIM!' at everyone that walked past. If you want to know whether it can match the previous blood-soaked games in the series, turn to page 52. Lara and Master Chief didn't want to miss out on the action, either – you'll find full previews of two of Xbox One's biggest exclusives, starting on page 24.

Of course, if you start getting a bit sick of punching and shooting people in ultra-realistic environments, you might want to jump into our Indie Revolution feature instead. We've spoken to the devs behind the best upcoming indie games, as well as the head of the ID@Xbox program, about how independents are changing the way games are made. Talking of ID@Xbox titles, I'd better go. Our office #IDARB tournament is about to start and Team **X-ONE** needs me...

*Steve Ashby*

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FEATURES EDITOR

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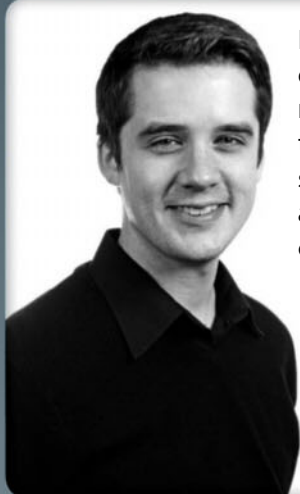
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# Join our **XONE** Reader Panel today!

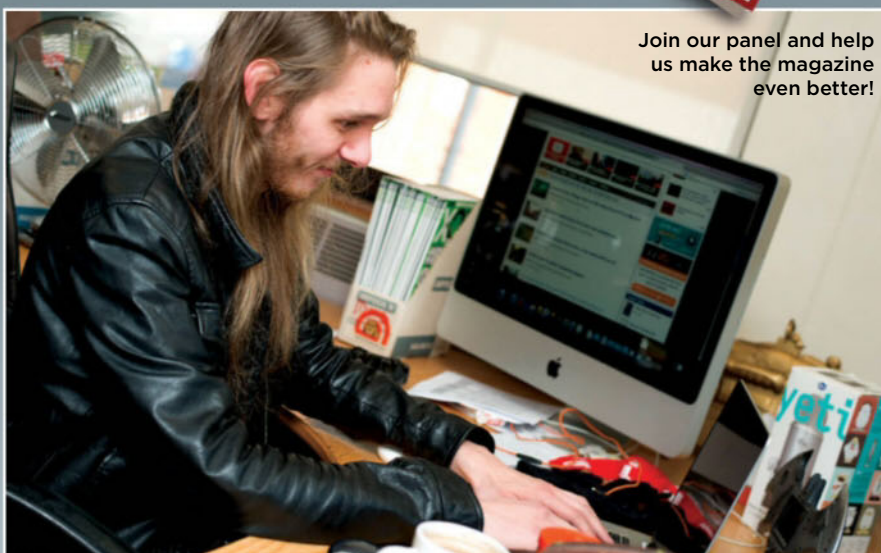
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Hi there. We love making **X-ONE** every month, and we hope you love reading it too. But this year we want to make the magazine even better, so we're asking for your help. By answering just a few questions, you could be selected to join our first ever **X-ONE** reader panel and shape the future of the magazine. We can't wait to hear what you think.

*Stephen Ashby*

**Stephen Ashby**  
Features Editor



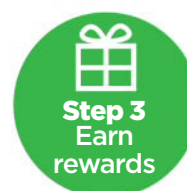
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WINNING THE WAR

Words Josh West

## WINNING THE WAR

# HOW XBOX ONE WILL BEAT PS4

THE EXPLOSIVE XBOX ONE ACTION GAMES THAT WILL BLOW AWAY THE COMPETITION

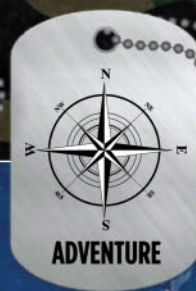
**T**his year, Microsoft is looking to re-establish Xbox as the home of the hardcore. The last 12 months have been incredibly strong for the system; with a slew of exclusives games and third-party content, the Xbox One has quickly turned its pre-launch misfortunes around. With its biggest franchises – *Halo*, *Gears Of War*, *Forza Motorsport* and *Fable* – all returning in 2015, alongside the likes of *Rise Of The Tomb Raider*, *Quantum Break* and the return of *Crackdown*, the Xbox One is becoming the only home for the player that subscribes to the notion that ‘sleep is for babies, gamers play all night’.

The Xbox has always been a great console for those that love to revel in action, adventure, violence and explosions – and 2015 has no shortage of all of the above. Devs are finally getting their heads around the next-gen tech, engines are evolving and publishers are becoming bolder. 2015 is going to be a sensational year for Xbox One owners, and that’s why **X-ONE** has cut the chaff and detailed the 30 incredible action games that should be on your radar. Whether you’re into first-person shooters, third-person action, fantasy adventure or a tough as nails online experience; for the first time ever, there’s something for every action aficionado on Xbox.



WINNING THE WAR

# FABLE LEGENDS



## NEW HORIZONS

Developer: **Lionhead**  
Publisher: **Microsoft Game Studios**  
Release Date: **Q2 2015**

You've got to hand it to Lionhead, it sure knows how to change things up. *Fable Legends* is a completely different kind of game to previous *Fable* titles. The 4v1 battle feels like a cross between *Evolve* and *The Elder Scrolls*, with heroes taking on a player-controlled beastie who tries to take them out as they complete a quest.

## WHY SHOULD I EVEN CARE ABOUT FABLE LEGENDS?

That's a good question, anonymous, omnipresent voice of the Xbox community, but it's easy enough to answer. While *Fable Legends* might be eschewing the traditional genre-defining *Fable* adventure-RPG format, it's still got plenty going for it as it adopts an ever-popular four-versus-one asymmetrical design. Letting you battle as a pre-defined hero or run...

## WAIT, WHAT, THERE'S NO CHARACTER CUSTOMISATION?!

Okay, look, don't interrupt us. As we were saying, *Fable Legends* will let you battle as a pre-defined hero (wait for it) or run amok as the villain. While character customisation is out this time, Lionhead is packing *Fable Legends* with a bunch of fun adventure archetypal characters for you to choose between. Don't worry too much about missing customisation options, basically.

## BUT DOES IT FEEL LIKE FABLE?

Every time we've had a chance to get our hands-on *Fable Legends* in the last few months, we've always walked away surprised. And we should probably add that we mean that in a good way. While it clearly isn't going to be full of whimsy and hanging constantly on a narrative thread, the arena combat is certainly engaging and entertaining, and the overall style still feels very much like the *Fable* you know and love.

## NO OPEN-WORLD ALBION?

Albion has been converted into gorgeous Unreal Engine 4 powered arenas where you and three other friends will battle through legions of monsters, traps and environmental puzzles before felling a big boss and completing a quest objective. The fun factor is ramped up considerably when you consider a buddy could be controlling those enemies as well – it adds a new twist to a title that could've felt overly familiar.

# HALO 5 GUARDIANS

## SPARTAN WARFARE

Developer: **343 Industries**  
 Publisher: **Microsoft Game Studios**  
 Release Date: **Q3 2015**

Just when you've run out of *Halo* to talk about, 343 Industries goes and releases *Halo: The Master Chief Collection* and *Halo: Nightfall* – each full of intergalactic *Halo 5: Guardians* secrets – and lets us get bloody hands-on with the multiplayer beta for a couple of weeks. Make no mistake; the upcoming Xbox One exclusive has bigger aspirations than any game in the series since *Halo 2*. Master Chief can no longer coast along on his reputation for delivering stunning FPS thrills, penchant for punching Sangheili heads, and gruff-yet-relatable dialogue anymore – you have the might of *Call Of Duty* to thank for that.

Instead, 343 needs to do everything it can to make this the best adventure it can as *Halo* looks to reclaim its throne from the deluge of modern warfare shooters. The multiplayer we can speak highly of; 343's insistence on stripping away all the extraneous *Halo 4* mechanics has worked wonders to give the Red and Blue Spartans their addictive edge back. As for the campaign? Well, that's being kept tightly under wraps but – after sitting through the less than stellar *Nightfall* series we can confirm this – Chief is in for one hell of a bad time trying to evade the newly crowned Spartan V Jameson Locke. *Halo 5: Guardians* is taking the fight to the enemy – and we aren't just talking about *COD* – with Master Chief on the front lines of the console war, we don't see the competition standing a chance.

TO READ OUR  
 EXCLUSIVE  
 INTERVIEW  
 WITH 343  
 INDUSTRIES,  
 TURN TO  
 PAGE 24

## QUANTUM BREAK

### TIME WARP

Developer: **Remedy Entertainment**  
 Publisher: **Microsoft Game Studios**  
 Release Date: **Q4 2015**



*Quantum Break* is something of a wild card in Microsoft's 2015 line-up of triple-A behemoths and expected sequels, but it's the kind of risk we are happy to see the publisher taking. It's *Gears Of War* meets *Doctor Who*, with a bit of transmedia-wizardry thrown in for good measure. Remedy – the studio behind *Max Payne* and *Alan Wake* – is using temporal distortion to create a highly stylised cover shooter. We can't wait to find out whether *Quantum Break* is using sci-fi parlour tricks to cover well-worn mechanics, or if it has the capacity to blow our minds.



## GEARS OF WAR

### JUDGEMENT DAY

Developer: **Black Tusk Studios**  
 Publisher: **Microsoft Game Studios**  
 Release Date: **Q3 2016**



*Gears Of War* re-defined the third-person action genre in the last generation, and we can't wait to see what the newly formed Black Tusk Studios – comprised of *Gears* alumni and industry veterans – can do with the franchise and a clean slate. Marcus Fenix basically did a Master Chief and finished the fight in *Gears Of War 3*, and so it's time for Microsoft to bring the guts, gore and ridiculous array of chainsaw infused weaponry into the next generation. Other games might re-use *Gears'* mechanics ad nauseam, but the king is about to return.



## SCALEBOUND

### HERE BE DRAGONS

Developer: **Platinum Games**  
 Publisher: **Microsoft Game Studios**  
 Release Date: **Q4 2015**



Microsoft pulled off the get of the generation when it locked Platinum in to develop an Xbox One exclusive all about kicking monster ass around a ridiculous open world. "When people really understand what we're building, they're gonna be shocked," Microsoft's Ken Lobb recently revealed. "What does Platinum do well? That's what they're building. And what do we do well? That's what we're adding. And yes, these are dragon companions." He also teased it has the potential to be "Game of All-Time," which is fighting talk if ever we heard it.



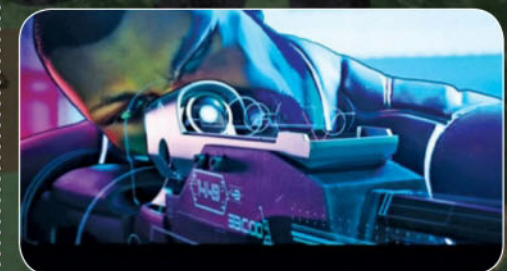
## CRACKDOWN

### POLICE BRUTALITY

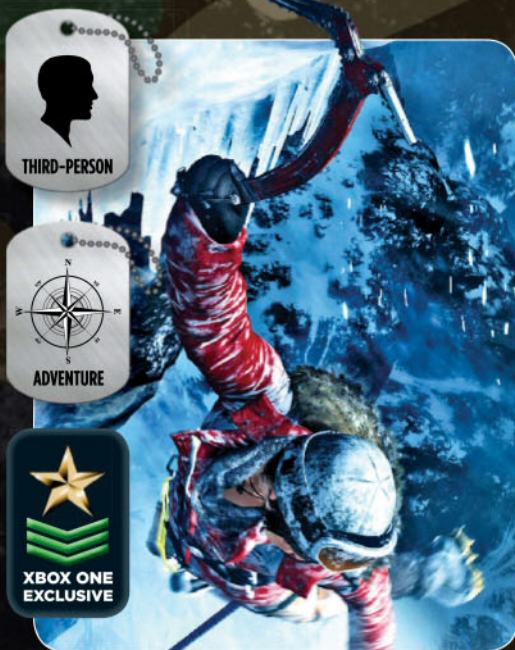
Developer: **Cloudgenie**  
 Publisher: **Microsoft Game Studios**  
 Release Date: **Q4 2015**



The popular open-world action game is back, but don't you dare call it *Crackdown 3*. Instead, this reboot of sorts takes place in an alternate timeline, one where the scope for crazy cloud-computed destruction is immense, where the ultimately mediocre *Crackdown 2* never existed and where the co-op numbers are bolstered to let you have more fun than ever. And if that wasn't enough, *GTA* and *Crackdown* creator David Jones is back in the director's seat, which is certainly welcomed after the 2010 sequel went entirely off the rails.



# WINNING THE WAR



## RISE OF THE TOMB RAIDER

### CHARTING SUCCESS

Developer: **Crystal Dynamics**  
Publisher: **Microsoft Game Studios**  
Release Date: **Q3 2015**

For Lara's exclusive Xbox expedition, the legendary survivalist will find herself combating the extreme Serbian ice-capped wastelands, legions of well-trained Trinity Soldiers and the puzzling design of suffocating tombs. *Rise Of The Tomb Raider* is going to be a stunning return to form powered by the only next generation console worth giving a damn about.

And it isn't merely a ploy to steal some of the attention from Sony's *Uncharted 4: A Thief's End* this holiday season; it's a massive statement of intent - that the Xbox line-up is diversifying, away from the heavy investment in gore-heavy FPS action (though there are still plenty of those). This is Crystal Dynamics proving that it can deliver a tight narrative campaign, engaging combat alongside a deep progression system, and it can do it without succumbing to the overbearing hand-holding that plagued the 2013 reboot.

While that title was a fantastic return to form for the tomb raider, there were certainly areas it could evolve. This is all coming to fruition in *Rise Of The Tomb Raider*. Crystal Dynamics is encouraging us to leave the beaten track behind; Lara has landed in Serbia to uncover the secrets surrounding The Lost City Of Kitezh, after all. She hasn't been thrust into a journey of survival this time, she's undertaken it herself. *Rise Of The Tomb Raider* puts Lara on the frontlines of the console war.

**FOR NEW  
DETAILS AND  
FIRST IMAGES  
OF RISE OF THE  
TOMB RAIDER,  
TURN TO  
PAGE 28**

## BATMAN ARKHAM KNIGHT

### LAST RIDE

Developer: **Rocksteady Games**  
Publisher: **Warner Bros.**  
Release Date: **6 June**

Bruce Wayne is going on his last cruise of Gotham City dressed from head-to-toe in bullet proof Kevlar, and he's taking us along for the ride. Rocksteady is wrapping up its fantastic *Arkham* trilogy with its most ambitious entry to date. Not only will we have the entirety of Gotham to protect, but Bats also has a new foe to contend with in the shape of the Arkham Knight. The world is bigger than ever, the battles more bone-shatteringly awesome and there's a drivable Batmobile...! We couldn't be more excited.



## THE WITCHER 3 WILD HUNT

### SKYRIM SLAYER

Developer: **CD Projekt RED**  
Publisher: **Bandai Namco**  
Release Date: **19 May**

*The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt* has *The Elder Scrolls* in its sights. CD Projekt RED is stepping up its game. Utilising the power of the Xbox One, *The Witcher 3* is seriously impressive with its hugely revamped combat system, incredible graphical effects and sprawling narrative. We can only hope that the ridiculous amount of delays that have struck this project over the years have given CD Projekt RED enough time to iron out all of the bugs and get this ambitious RPG running as smoothly as humanly possible.



## STAR WARS BATTLEFRONT

### FORCE AWAKENED

Developer: **DICE**  
Publisher: **EA**  
Release Date: **Q3 2015**

This has been so long coming, that we can hardly believe it's happening. It's been ten years since *Star Wars Battlefront 2* and, honestly, we sort of assumed the series had become one with the force. But here we are, in 2015, with the kings of the modern warfare shooters delivering the *Star Wars* game of our dreams. Hints seem to indicate that DICE may have transitioned next-gen *Battlefront* into a fully-fledged FPS, which we are fine with - just let us pull off a Snow Speeder hit-and-run on Jar Jar Binks.



## DEAD ISLAND 2

### HOLIDAY RUINED

Developer: **Yager Development**  
Publisher: **Deep Silver**  
Release Date: **Q3 2015**

We're not going to lie to you, it's not easy to forget *Dead Island: Riptide*, though getting *Spec Ops: The Line* developers Yager on board certainly helps us to have faith in *Dead Island 2*. There's something so wonderfully anarchic about the studios' vision that we can't wait to get our hands back on it. Yager is building a huge game world to let up-to eight players co-exist within a single city, putting the emphasis back onto goofy action, and - above all else - re-injecting some fun back into this shambling excuse of a horror genre trope.



# METAL GEAR SOLID V THE PHANTOM PAIN

## TACTICAL ADVANTAGE

Developer: **Kojima Productions**  
Publisher: **Konami**  
Release Date: **Q2 2015**

Big Boss has already had a stunning Xbox One debut with *Ground Zeroes*, and we honestly couldn't be more excited about continuing the story of *Metal Gear Solid V* in *The Phantom Pain* later this year. This should be on every gamer's radar in 2015. Want a reason why? How about three?



**MULTIPLAYER MADNESS**  
If a huge and twisting single-player campaign wasn't enough for you, *Metal Gear* will also feature a full online mode, just in case you fancy using your mad sneaking skills to truly dominate.

**FAMILY FEUD**  
For long-term *Metal Gear* fans, this is the game we've been waiting for. Big Boss will finally break, turning from troubled protagonist to villainous antagonist - he's got to become Solid Snake's nemesis sometime.

**MAP-TASTIC**  
*The Phantom Pain* is delivering gorgeous, sprawling open worlds into *Metal Gear* for the first time. The days of linear progression are dead, long live tactical espionage on a ludicrous scale.

## JUST CAUSE 3

### TOTAL CHAOS

Developer: **Avalanche Studios**  
Publisher: **Square Enix**  
Release Date: **Q3 2015**



*Just Cause 3* is destined to be one of the most explosive action games available on your Xbox One in 2015. Avalanche Studios is back, promising a worthy successor to *Just Cause 2*, utilising the power of the Xbox One to improve the all-important physics engine and size of the playground. If you haven't played a *Just Cause* game before, you're missing out on some ridiculous entertainment - honestly, we still return to *JC2* on the Xbox 360 to strap soldiers to passing planes and propane tanks to speedy vehicles just to see the end result.



## BATTLEFIELD HARDLINE

### ALL-POINTS BULLETIN

Developer: **Visceral Games**  
Publisher: **EA**  
Release Date: **20 March**



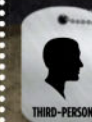
DICE has stepped aside and let *Dead Space* developer Visceral step up to the modern warfare shooter with a few bold new ideas. The studio has ditched the focus on military action, and replaced it with a wild cops and robbers take. Not only do we have high hopes that the single-player campaign will actually be bloody great this year, but the multiplayer will also be the best it's been since *Bad Company 2*. We're talking action on a huge scale, well-designed maps and a great emphasis on running amok through huge cities.



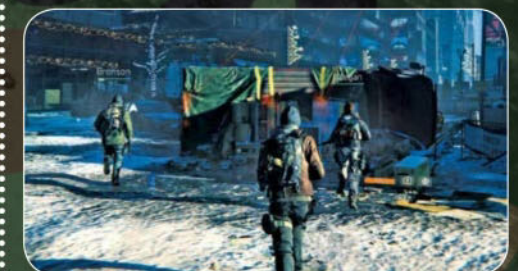
## THE DIVISION

### INFECTIOUS ANTICIPATION

Developer: **Ubisoft Massive**  
Publisher: **Ubisoft**  
Release Date: **Q4 2015**

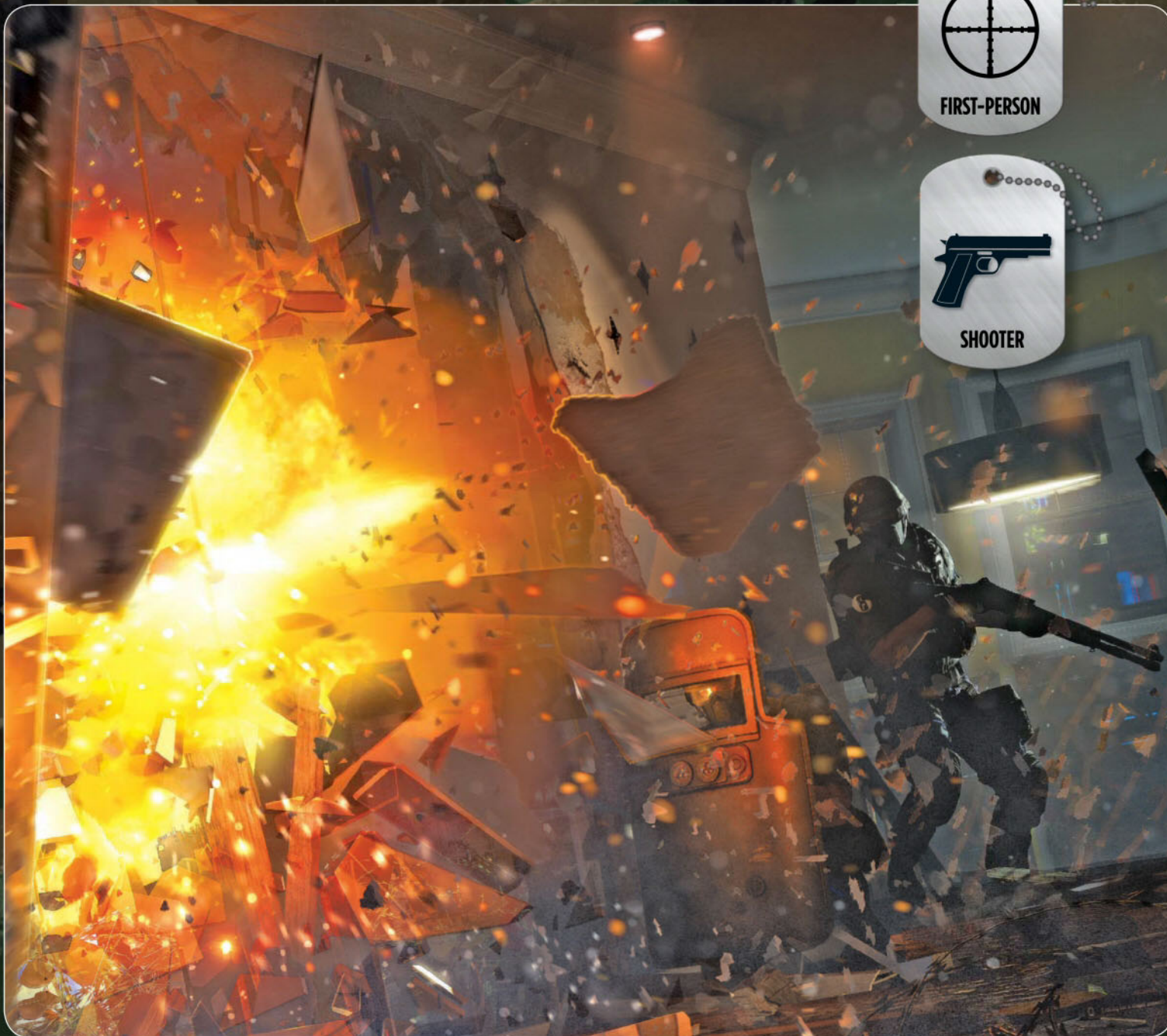


What happens when Sam Fisher, Rainbow Six and the Ghost Recon squads fail to protect and serve? The Division gets called in to clean up the mess. Ubisoft's latest open-world extravaganza is dropping players into a wasteland vision of New York City, offering some of the most sensationally awesome graphics and butt-clenchingly tense gameplay we've seen so far this generation. You won't be on your own to clean up the streets of delinquent gangs, nasty infections and lord knows what else, mind; you'll be able to team up with three friends.



WINNING THE WAR

# RAINBOW SIX: SIEGE



## CALCULATED AGGRESSION

Developer: **Ubisoft Montreal**  
Publisher: **Ubisoft**  
Release Date: **Q3 2015**

Do you think you're up to the challenge of a truly hardcore round of *Rainbow Six*? Forget *Vegas*, Ubisoft is taking the series back to its one-shot one-kill roots, once again pitting terrorists against the special forces in tight environments. Tactical squad-based play is the only

way to succeed, as players will need to work in tandem to confirm kills, extract VIPs and defuse bombs – all while fully destructible environments can leave you exposed from literally any angle.

It's easy to wrap your head around the design of *Siege*, but mastering it will be another story entirely. The terrorists will be given a short time at the beginning of each round to fortify their surroundings – blocking stairwells, rigging corridors with traps and boarding up windows and doors.

The *Rainbow Six* operatives, on the other hand, will use this time to scout the location, pick a breaching point and put some thought into a rough plan of action. What follows is a few minutes of intense, terrifying combat where any movement could be your last.

Each round will be different to the last, thanks to the destructible environments. While the terrorists and Special Forces reset their position once the last body drops, the environment will still be a mess of exploded ceilings and bullet-

riddled walls. It adds a huge and fresh dynamic to each and every game. Of course, Ubisoft is yet to reveal the full suite of modes, maps and characters that will be available at launch, but we only hope the studio remembers what made this series great to begin with – the impeccable balance and great customisation options. If you're sick of multiplayer games like *Call Of Duty* and *Battlefield*, *Rainbow Six: Siege* is going to offer something completely fresh, challenging and undeniably addictive.

## THE ELDER SCROLLS ONLINE: TAMRIEL UNLIMITED

MASSIVELY HYPED

Developer: **ZeniMax Online Studios**  
Publisher: **Bethesda Softworks**  
Release Date: **9 June**



It's been almost a year since *The Elder Scrolls Online* was delayed, stripping us of our first truly next-generation MMO experience on Xbox One. But it's okay; ZeniMax has not only confirmed a release date, but the studio has also confirmed that it is ditching the subscription model and will now let you roam the entirety of Tamriel for the kickass price of, well, nothing. Console MMOs traditionally have had a tough run in the past, but that's why ZeniMax has spent the last 12 months ironing out the bugs discovered in the PC version, and reworking the interface for Xbox One.



## RUMOURS

WITH OUR EAR TO THE GROUND, THESE ARE THE KILLER ACTION GAMES YOU'LL LIKELY SEE ANNOUNCED IMMINENTLY



## TITANFALL 2

Respawn Entertainment is hard at work on two projects right now. One is another new IP. And the other? All signs are pointing towards a sequel to its immensely impressive debut FPS *Titanfall*.



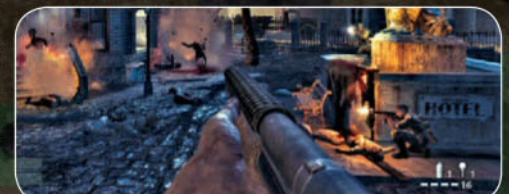
## DISHONORED 2

If you believe the ridiculous amount of leaks over the years, Arcane Studios is currently building *Dishonored 2*. Successor to the stealth throne Thief once claimed, we've been waiting for this.



## BORDERLANDS 3

Gearbox has announced it is working on another *Borderlands*, and that it's going to be "the big one" but has stopped short of naming or dating it. Our money is on it being *Borderlands 3*, and not another spin-off, though.



## CALL OF DUTY: WORLD AT WAR

2015 is Treyarch's turn to release a *Call Of Duty*, and if leaked info and title screens are to be believed, the studio will be delivering a sequel to World War II shooter *World At War* - not *Black Ops II* - this November.

## MAD MAX ROAD WARRIOR

Developer: **Avalanche Studios**  
Publisher: **Warner Bros.**  
Release Date: **Q2 2015**



With director George Miller hard at work bringing *Mad Max* back to cinema with *Fury Road*, Warner Bros. has gone and commissioned *Just Cause* developer Avalanche to bring the franchise's wild wastelands antics to Xbox One. *Mad Max* won't be as openly bonkers as *Just Cause*, though, instead the focus is on hyper-violent combat, building death-trap vehicles and racing them against the lunatics that inhabit the desert wastes. Avalanche might have gone fairly quiet as of late with its open-world action adventure, but with *Fury Road*'s release date fast approaching, we expect to see this one make quite the impact in the coming months.



## HOMEFRONT THE REVOLUTION

GUERRILLA WARFARE

Developer: **Dambuster Studios**  
Publisher: **Deep Silver**  
Release Date: **2016**



The call for revolution has subsided. Crytek UK sought to re-invent *Homefront* and it was looking fantastic. A gorgeous open world doused in unrest, propaganda and a call to arms for the oppressed citizens of Philadelphia. After the developer ran into financial problems, Deep Silver purchased the IP, and is taking *Homefront: The Revolution* to the finish line. The game's take on scavenging, intense guerrilla warfare and evolving battle zones sounds brilliantly ambitious - we just hope it releases before its best ideas are liberated by other, more time-conscious, developers.



# WINNING THE WAR

## DOOM

### HELL BOUND

Developer: **id Software**  
Publisher: **Bethesda**  
Release Date: **Q3 2015**

*Doom* is one of the industry's best kept secrets. Revealed only to the most dedicated franchise fans in the world, not many have had the opportunity to cast their gaze over id's stunning Xbox One revival of its seminal action/horror hybrid shooter. What should you expect when it's revealed to the world at E3? Blood, monsters, gore and freaking gigantic shotguns, that's what. Remember, all you *Wolfenstein: The New Order* owners, keep hold of your copy, because Bethesda assures us that the closed beta is still coming – and you know you want to be among the first to sample its hellish thrills.



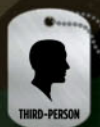
## MISSING IN ACTION

WHILE MOST TITLES GO THROUGH THE SAME ARDUOUS PROCESS OF TEASE, REVEAL AND RELEASE – SOME NEED A MORE TIME IN THE DEVELOPMENT PIPELINE



## HITMAN 6

Agent 47 is returning, and he's doing it in style. IO Interactive will be harnessing the power of the Xbox One to deliver vibrant open worlds, built to let you experiment with crazy executions and assassination techniques. We just don't know when it's emerging from the shadows.



## MASS EFFECT 4

Developer: **BioWare**  
Publisher: **EA**  
Release Date: **Q4 2015**

### STAR GAZING

*Mass Effect* as you know it is over. The last piece of the trilogy might have rubbed you the wrong way but a game that so effortlessly gave the illusion of narrative freedom was always going to piss people off as it came to an end. BioWare is going back to universe basics with *Mass Effect* for Xbox One, starting with fresh new characters, stories and struggles to overcome. Teases from the studio promise an emphasis on cinematic realism, galaxy exploration and intense RPG action. Basically, it could be the best sci-fi game ever.



## MIRROR'S EDGE 2

Developer: **DICE**  
Publisher: **EA**  
Release Date: **Q1 2016**

### FREE RUNNING

Against all odds, Faith is returning to the world of videogames. DICE's risky first-person freerunning action game is coming to Xbox One – and it's going to be bigger and better. The studio might be making *Mirror's Edge 2* into a prequel, supposedly to bring some solid story to the series, but the more exciting news is that it's delivering a huge open world for you to run, leap and grapple across in 2016. *Mirror's Edge* might not have been a huge seller, but we loved it for its boldness in trying something new.

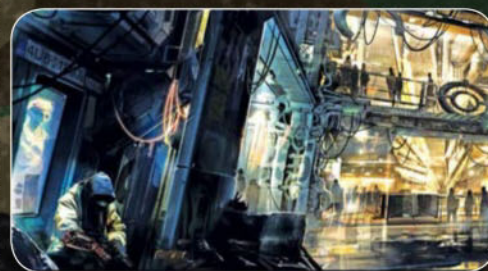


## ASSASSIN'S CREED VICTORY

Developer: **Ubisoft Quebec**  
Publisher: **Ubisoft**  
Release Date: **Nov 2015**

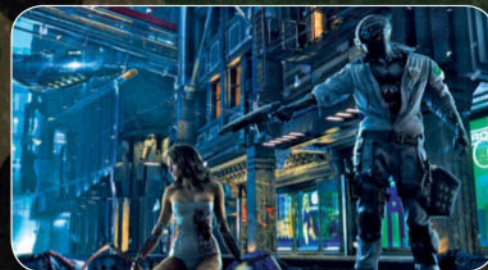
### VICTORIAN SECRETS

*Assassin's Creed* might have taken a leap off of the tallest tower in France – and missed the hay stack – with *Unity*, but Ubisoft is looking to put AC back on the right track with *Victory*. This will be the first time Ubisoft's Quebec studio takes the reins on an AC game, this time pulling the action into the city of London during the Victorian era. Quebec is rumoured to be overhauling the movement system; expect a full reveal at E3.



## DEUS EX UNIVERSE

While we always hoped for a straight-up *Human Revolution* sequel, Square Enix is making the franchise a little bolder. It has multiple titles planned for 2015/2016, all falling under the 'Deus Ex Universe' banner. New story, new characters, new concept art, no release date. Typical.



## CYBERPUNK 2077

CD Projekt RED might be hard at work on *The Witcher 3*, but it already has its next project lined up in the form of *Cyberpunk 2077*. This action RPG will stay true to its table-top RPG heritage, although – considering the development time of *The Witcher* games – it could take a while.

# THE STORIES, STRATEGIES, HEROES & MACHINES

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# NETWORK

EXPERT ANALYSIS ON THE WORLD OF XBOX GAMING

## WHICH OF RARE'S CLASSIC TITLES SHOULD COME TO XBOX ONE?

The legendary Rare studios made some incredible games in the Nineties, but which do you want to see remade or rebooted for Xbox One?

There are plenty of huge developers in the gaming industry right now, but back in the Eighties, Nineties and Noughties, few were better known than Rare. The studio developed huge games during its heyday, bringing titles like *Perfect Dark*, *Battletoads* and *Banjo-Kazooie* to the masses in the late Nineties. The studio was a second-party developer for Nintendo from 1994 until 2002, and in that time released titles like *Donkey Kong Country*, *GoldenEye* and *Perfect Dark*. When Microsoft bought Rare in 2002, it was at its peak, having recently shipped *Banjo-Tooie* and *Conker's Bad Fur Day*.

Since then, we've had a few more big games from Rare, including *Perfect Dark Zero* – an Xbox 360 launch title – and *Banjo-Kazooie: Nuts & Bolts*. There were new IPs, too, such as the hugely popular *Viva Piñata* and *Grabbed By The Ghoulies*. But after such a long time, isn't it time we saw Rare re-enter the spotlight? This month, we asked you which Rare series and games you would like to see on Xbox One. Whether it was a remake of a classic or a new game in a series, we wanted to know which characters you missed and which gameplay styles you felt were missing from the latest Microsoft console.

Personally? We'd love to see Conker make a proper comeback, with a swear-filled, cute-but-oh-so-offensive new title to poke fun at how 'serious' the game industry has become. You might want to get on that now, Rare.

“Banjo or Blast Corps!”  
@WILLOWRPE

“Conker and Banjo! :D”  
@TRUEBF3GAMING

“Conker's Bad Fur Day again, no question.”  
@CPFCDAZZLER

“I'd love to see a remake of Donkey Kong '64 but something tells me that it will never come to Xbox.”  
@WALKER0104

“got2b Banjo.”  
@GOOSEXLEE

“Conker & Diddy Kong Racing – Remake followed by reboot for both.”  
@THUNDERFLAP

“I would like to see new IP from them that isn't Kinect-related. They have the talent, just wasted working on Kinect games. But if I had to pick 1, Conker: Live And Reloaded.”  
@CHUNKYLOVER25

“@Xbox please don't, how about ya remake Halo Reach @343 @Bungie”  
@MICHAELSALINASK



GET INVOLVED, JOIN THE X-ONE NETWORK



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"How about a good Perfect Dark game? Come on Rare I know you still have that talent somewhere."  
@ORGANICPEACH



"Diddy Kong Racing for sure! That game was a blast 4 players!  
#diddykong #rareware"  
@GAMESUTTON1



"Their stuff on N64 is stuff of legend. 360... was OK, could & should have been a lot better."  
@RAZGRIZ\_FXT



"Remake Diddy Kong Racing!"  
@FOGIZZLE



"Conker and Perfect Dark..."  
@HEADBUSTER82



"Perfect Dark. The original. Would be amazing."  
@PUENTEBRAVO



"Conker's Bad Fur Day. Everyone needs a foul-mouthed giant poo at least once in their life."  
@ORIGINARYMAGOO



# WHICH OF RARE'S GAMES DO YOU WANT TO SEE ON XBOX ONE?

**20.37%**  
**PERFECT DARK**

*Perfect Dark Zero* didn't get the best review scores when it launched alongside the Xbox 360, but a recent HD remake of the original game still played brilliantly. We'd love to see what Rare could do with this franchise now.

**22.22%**  
**CONKER'S BAD  
FUR DAY**

This was by far the most popular choice on Twitter, but it only just beat *Ms Dark* when it came to the final numbers. The foul-mouthed squirrel's best-known title, *Conker's Bad Fur Day*, was remade as *Conker: Live and Reloaded* on the Xbox, but after ten years, it's definitely time he made another appearance on the Xbox One.

**2.31%**  
**KINECT SPORTS**

We're a little disappointed that this one even got 2%. We're not saying it's a bad series, but with the wealth of classic games available from Rare, we are surprised to see anyone voting for a Kinect-based sports game.

**2.31%**  
**KILLER INSTINCT**

Only 2% of you want to see another *Killer Instinct* title. Perhaps this is because you remember the 2013 Xbox One game, or maybe it's because we've seen so many fighters coming to the console recently, but this one isn't in high demand.

**3.24%**  
**GRABBED BY  
THE GHOULIES**

Maybe it's because the original Xbox game came out around 14 years ago, or maybe it was the repetitive nature of the gameplay. Either way, this one was not among your most-wanted games. Instead, *Grabbed By The Ghoulies* is perhaps one Rare game we can write off as a failed experiment.

**2.79%**  
**BLAST CORPS**

This fun N64 game might make a good Xbox Live Arcade title - you took control of demolition vehicles that flatten buildings to clear a path for a truck carrying nuclear missiles. It's not hugely in demand by you guys, though.

**RUMOUR  
HAS IT THAT  
RARE MAY  
ANNOUNCE  
A NEW XBOX  
ONE TITLE AT  
E3 2015**

## 16.67% BANJO-KAZOOIE

We freaking loved *Banjo-Kazooie* and *Banjo-Tooie* on N64, and while *Nuts & Bolts* satisfied our craving slightly, it wasn't quite up to the same standard. There's nothing like this on Xbox One right now – with smart level design, gorgeous graphics and extensive collectibles, we can see this beating games like *LittleBigPlanet*.

## THE MISSING CLASSICS

We got a huge response on Twitter, with many of you wanting to see remakes of *Diddy Kong Racing*, *GoldenEye* and more. However, with *Diddy Kong* owned by Nintendo and the rights to *James Bond* titles still owned by Activision (as far as we know), some of Rare's best-loved titles are strictly off the agenda. Thankfully, their back-catalogue is still stuffed full of win.

## 9.72% VIVA PIÑATA

You guys still seem to miss getting your piñata fix, with no new Xbox game in the series since 2008. Still, it gathered a huge amount of attention when it first launched, winning multiple awards. It's definitely pretty weird – what other game can claim to be a gardening and animal-breeding sim? But it was well received by gamers, and a modern sequel would be great.

## 7.87% KAMEO

We haven't heard anything about *Kameo* for a long time now, but we would love to play a sequel to the Xbox 360 launch title. The game put you in the shoes of a fairy who could take different animal forms, each with different abilities. We loved it, but sales weren't great – and with only around 8% of you voting for it, we can perhaps understand why we haven't seen another one yet.

## 5.09% JET FORCE GEMINI

The Xbox One isn't exactly short on third-person shooters, but 5% of you would still love to see this one resurrected. The original had some frustrating mechanics that forced you to play through levels several times before you could finish the game. But with these ironed out and some brilliant level design, it could be great.

## 7.41% BATTLETOADS

We thought this classic title would've had a smaller following – out of all the people that voted, over 7% of you wanted another *Battletoads* game. The story and graphics were especially Nineties, which could be brilliant if that stayed the same in a new iteration. Perhaps the toads' time has passed, though.

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### LIFE IS STRANGE

We dive into the time-rewinding world of a teenage girl. Try saying *that* ten times.

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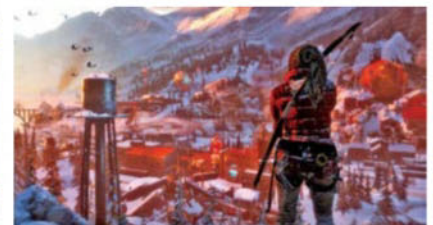
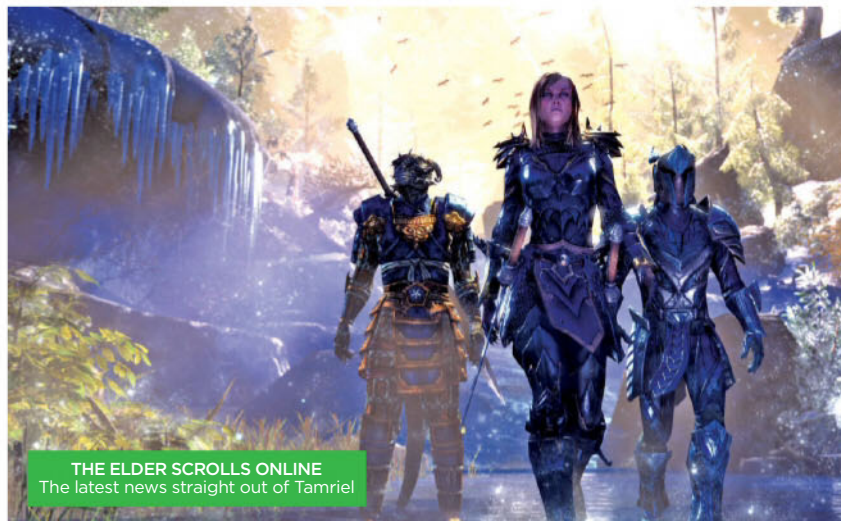
### MINECRAFT



### PROJECT CARS

## XONE WEBSITE

[www.XB1.co.uk](http://www.XB1.co.uk)



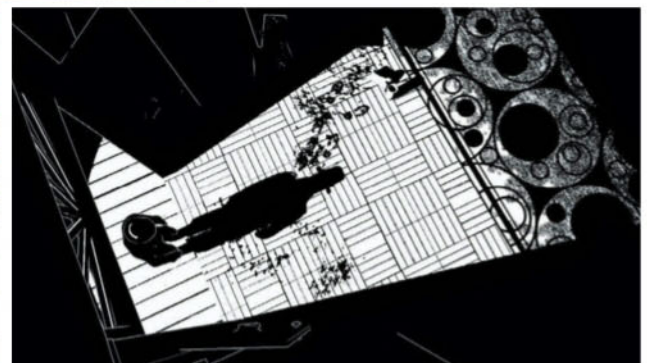
### RISE OF THE TOMB RAIDER



### SMITE



### JUST CAUSE 3



### WHITE NIGHT

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**HALO 5: GUARDIANS**



**BATTLEFIELD HARDLINE**



**FINAL FANTASY TYPE-0**



**DMC: DEVIL MAY CRY**



**GTA ONLINE: HEISTS**  
Crime and debauchery in *GTA Online*'s new game mode



**ORI AND THE BLIND FOREST**



**BATMAN: ARKHAM KNIGHT**



**FORZA MOTORSPORT 6**

# 5 THINGS WE LEARNT THIS ISSUE

The Xbox knowledge we picked up at XB1.co.uk

**1**



## GTA HEISTS ARE HERE AT LAST

After months of waiting, Rockstar finally set a date for online heists in *GTA V*, and they're here right now. It's time to shove the disc back in and start playing again.

**2**



## RARE IS MAKING NEW GAMES

Microsoft revealed this month that Rare has "multiple projects in development." There are big rumours about a new Rare title being revealed at E3 this year...

**3**



## BETHESDA WILL BE AT E3

For the first time in history, Bethesda will be holding its own press conference at this year's E3. Will it announce *Fallout 4*, or another *Elder Scrolls*? We shall see.

**4**



## XBOX ONE SCREENSHOTS ARE HERE

The March system update brings with it the ability to take screenshots on Xbox One. It can be activated via Kinect, or with a double-tap of the Home button.

**5**



## NEW COD ANNOUNCED

In a move surprising nobody, Activision announced that a new *COD* title will be hitting shelves before the end of this year. It will, apparently, be "loaded with innovation".

» Get your daily fix of Xbox One news, opinion and more at [www.XB1.co.uk](http://www.XB1.co.uk)

# EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW: 343 INDUSTRIES STUDIO HEAD JOSH HOLMES

# HALO 5 GUARDIANS

Discussing the beautiful game

## DETAILS

### PUBLISHER

Microsoft Game Studios

### DEVELOPER

343 Industries

### CREDITS

Halo 4 [2012]

Halo: Spartan

Assault [2013]

Halo: The Master Chief

Collection [2014]

### PLAYERS

1-TBC

### KINECT?

TBC

### SMARTGLASS?

TBC

### RELEASE DATE

November

### WEBSITE

halowaypoint.com

### TWITTER

@Halo



*Halo 5: Guardians*

is Microsoft's most important asset in the ongoing console wars. That

also makes it Microsoft's most closely guarded secret. Remember what happened when **X-ONE** revealed

that Agent Locke was not only playable, but considered a "primary character", there was uproar in the virtual streets. 343 Industries might have let gamers get a taste of *Halo 5* for three weeks with the beta, but the reality is that all it's done is make us insatiably hungry for more, whilst simultaneously revealing next to nothing about the campaign or wider multiplayer experience.

So, as you might imagine, we leaped at the opportunity to get on the phone with 343's studio head Josh Holmes and get the answers to some all-important questions. Here's the thing you're about to learn when it comes to *Halo* – the marketing machine surrounding it is truly impressive, but where there's a will there's a way.

**X-ONE** broke on through to the other side and managed to extrapolate some rather interesting new information that you ever-inquisitive *Halo* fans will have no problem revelling in.

**It's something of a surprise to see a beta this early in production – especially considering how much work it takes to launch them – how integral was it to ongoing development efforts and the evolution of *Halo*?**

The beta was really important to us. For *Halo 5*, we are looking at making really substantial changes to the way that the game plays. We look at it as the most important evolution of *Halo* gameplay, definitely in any of the recent games. Putting the game in the hands of fans early enough, where we could take feedback and react to that – and see

how people were using the new Spartan Abilities, how those are playing with one another within the context of the different maps and game modes – was really important to us as developers.

It was nerve-wracking because – as you said – you don't typically see a game putting out a beta this early, almost a year from release. It was a huge amount of work, it caused people to give up their holidays to get the game ready and put it out, I know a number of people were pretty grumpy towards the end of that [laughs] but when they saw fans getting online and playing the game and got the feedback,

But at the same time, we don't want it to feel like that speed advantage is so great that people are moving too quickly around the map, that they are too hard to track, and so finding the right sweet spot in the delta between those two speeds – your base movement and your top sprint speed – is really important to us.

Coming out of the beta, we made the choice based on how we saw players playing within the beta – and then also based on the feedback we received – to boost the base movement and strafe speed a little bit, so players have a greater sense of agility when they are moving at base speed. And

then also they also have the ability to pursue someone that might be trying to sprint away from an engagement and can track them a little more readily. We also brought the top sprint speed down slightly, just to narrow that delta.

"Halo 5 is going to look absolutely visually stunning when it releases later this year"



I think everybody felt like this was a really, really important and beneficial experience for all of us.

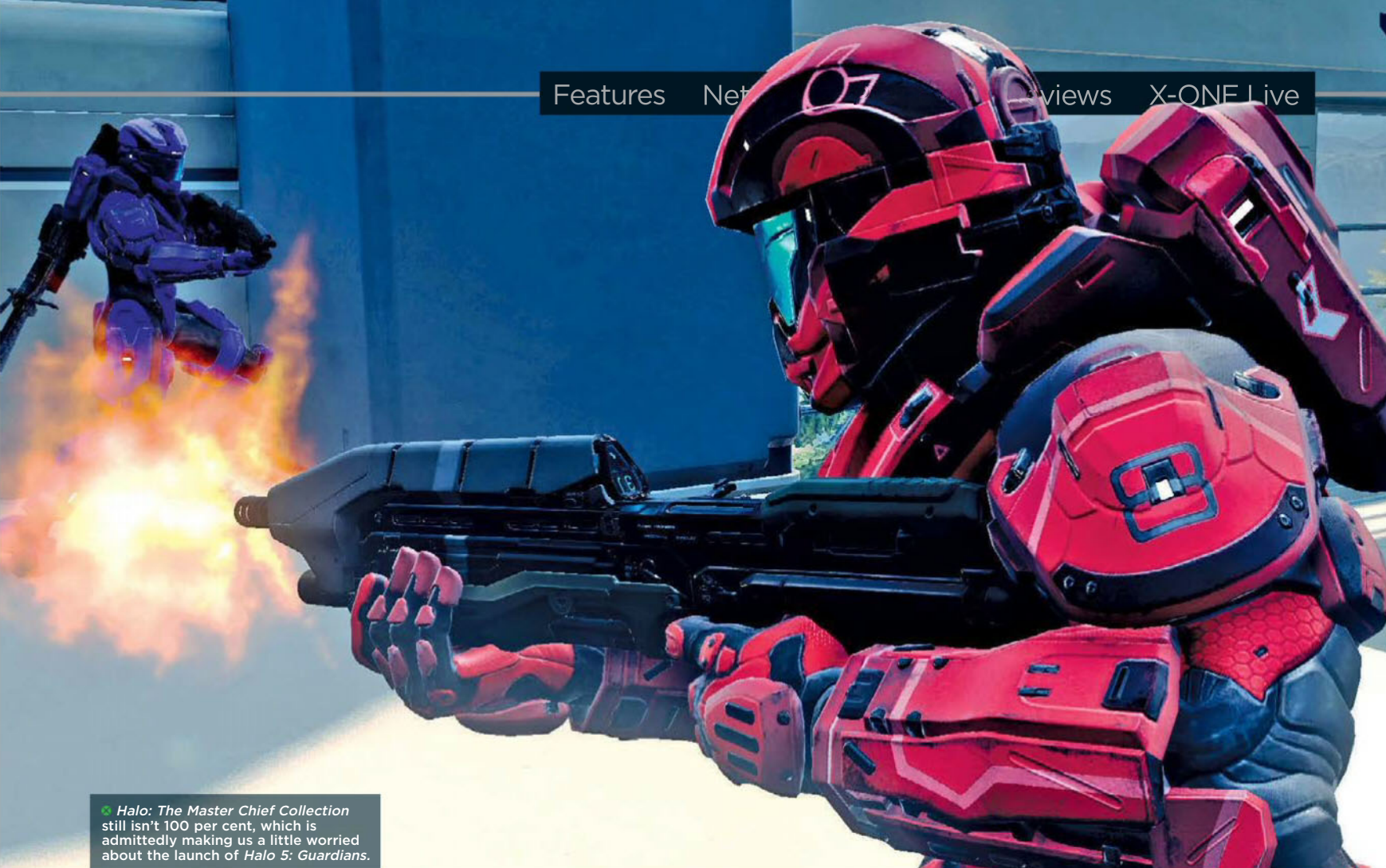
**The base movement speed felt noticeably slower compared to Bungie's *Halo* games, while Sprint felt faster than it was in *Halo 4*. How will 343 respond and react to this kind of feedback?**

We saw the same anecdotal feedback, and for us the challenge was to make sure that we have the right pace to the game experience. We wanted to give players a lot of freedom and flexibility in the way that they can move around the map, and give them many more tools to do that. At the same time, we wanted the top speed – the Sprint speed – to feel like it was a meaningful choice. When you're going into Sprint, you're choosing to put down your weapon temporarily, you're choosing to give up the ability to replenish your shields. If you've taken damage at that point, it's a really meaningful decision that should carry a lot of weight.

**The new Smart Link aiming system split opinion. How committed is 343 to the spirit of the beta? If feedback were universally negative, would the studio have cut the system?**

I think for us, the Smart Link aiming system was really about how do we connect the Spartan with their weapons in a way that feels believable and realises the fiction that has been in there from the beginning in the canon, in a way that just feels more believable. Think about it like you're connected cybernetically to your heads-up display and your weapon – your tactical awareness – is being augmented by the smart systems. What would that look like and feel like? That was sort of the inspiration behind how we approached it.

We wanted to hear feedback from the community about how that played. We got some great feedback on the treatment of particular weapons – such as the DMR being a little bit too obtrusive in terms of the position of the scope of the



❌ *Halo: The Master Chief Collection* still isn't 100 per cent, which is admittedly making us a little worried about the launch of *Halo 5: Guardians*.

**DID YOU KNOW?** If you don't like the new Abilities, you'll be able to switch them off in custom games for rounds of old-school *Halo* action



❌ 343 Industries has promised that the final resolution will be increased from 720p to something far more impressive before launch.

screen, we've moved that as result of that feedback. But I think overall that the feedback that we got from players was really positive about the system, and about how it better connected them to their weapon systems as a Spartan.

**What kind of feedback have you received through the Halo Community Feedback Program?**

The feedback program is a unique gift for us as developers; we have this incredibly passionate and enthusiastic group of fans who have gone out of their way to sign up. Just looking at the amount of *Halo* that these people have played – I think the average amount of titles played is four – these are people that have been with the franchise for over ten years, that have poured 900 hours on average into playing a *Halo* game. It's just amazing to then be able to go directly to them, and survey them on different aspects of the *Halo 5: Guardians* experience. And so we took a lot of that feedback and use it to make decisions and tweaks.

**The focus of the beta was on small-scale confrontations, but how will the feedback be relevant to larger maps and objective based game modes?**

We really wanted to focus on that four versus four experience because it puts the focus on the core of the gameplay. There's this foundation of gameplay that goes across all experiences in *Halo*, and it needs to work well throughout the entire game. But we felt like four versus four really



✦ The new Spartan Abilities seem to resonate well with fans, so expect them to be tweaked and refined over the coming months.

## HALO 5 BETA STATISTICS

TOTAL KILLS:

181,389,366

TOTAL GAMEPLAY HOURS:

2,539,847

TOTAL MATCHES PLAYED:

20,000,000

TOTAL FRAG GRENADE KILLS:

11,529,664

TOTAL SHOTS FIRED:

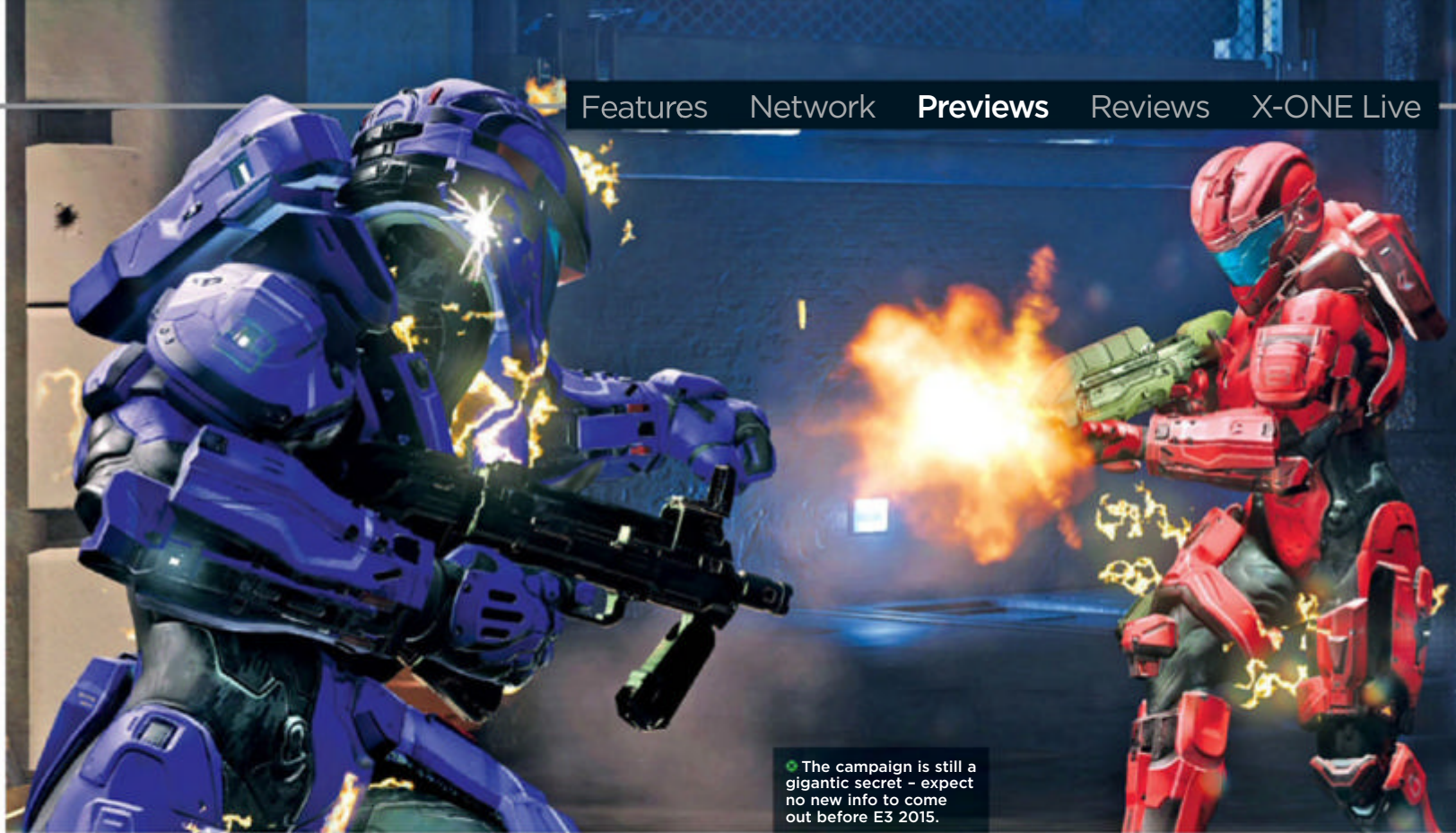
6,492,761,794

TOTAL GROUND POUND KILLS:

565,902

TOTAL SPARTAN CHARGE KILLS:

1,286,085



• The campaign is still a gigantic secret – expect no new info to come out before E3 2015.

places a lot of focus on the core mobility and how the core gameplay systems work. It allows us to have a much more detailed view on that.

**So the feedback from that will still be useful to you?**

If it works there, then it should translate well across the other experiences. Obviously the campaign, and then some of the other larger experiences that we haven't spoken about so far, have much larger spaces, they have vehicles and things like that. So you want to know that the core nucleus of gameplay is going to work well within those other experience. I think the feedback that we got from the beta within that arena environment was really helpful in tuning those systems.

**Many of the new systems and mechanics felt like a direct response to the criticism that was levelled at *Halo 4*. In a sense, does it feel like you are trying to right some wrongs with *Guardians*?**

We wanted to get to the core of what makes a great *Halo* experience. I think that the placement of Power Weapons within the maps really dictating a greater focus on map control, that I think is really the spirit of *Halo* and we wanted to get back to that. That was in part a celebration of *Halo's* arena legacy and thinking about the anniversary of *Halo 2*, and also just reflecting on the experience of *Halo 4* and wanting to bring that core back to the fore for the experience. We are really happy with how the game is playing as a result.

**The beta was locked at 720p resolution with a target fps of 60. How much do you plan for this to improve before the full game launches? What is your current target?**

The beta was very much focused on gameplay systems and readying those gameplay systems early enough to get them into the hands of fans. In terms of graphics, visuals – the optimisation of the game engine and visual polish, that usually happens towards the end of the production cycle. So, obviously, we wanted to get everything into

“*Halo 5: Guardians* has a brand new engine that's been built from the ground up for Xbox One”

enough shape so it wasn't just blocks and greyscale [laugh], and that people could really feel like they could understand the experience. You can expect that that's not the final resolution and that the game is going to look absolutely visually stunning when it releases later this year.

**A lot of gamers are concerned over the state *Halo: The Master Chief Collection* launched in and what that means for *Halo 5*. What steps are you taking to ensure it doesn't happen again?**

*Halo 5: Guardians* has a brand new engine that's been built from the ground up for Xbox One. It's been the focus of our

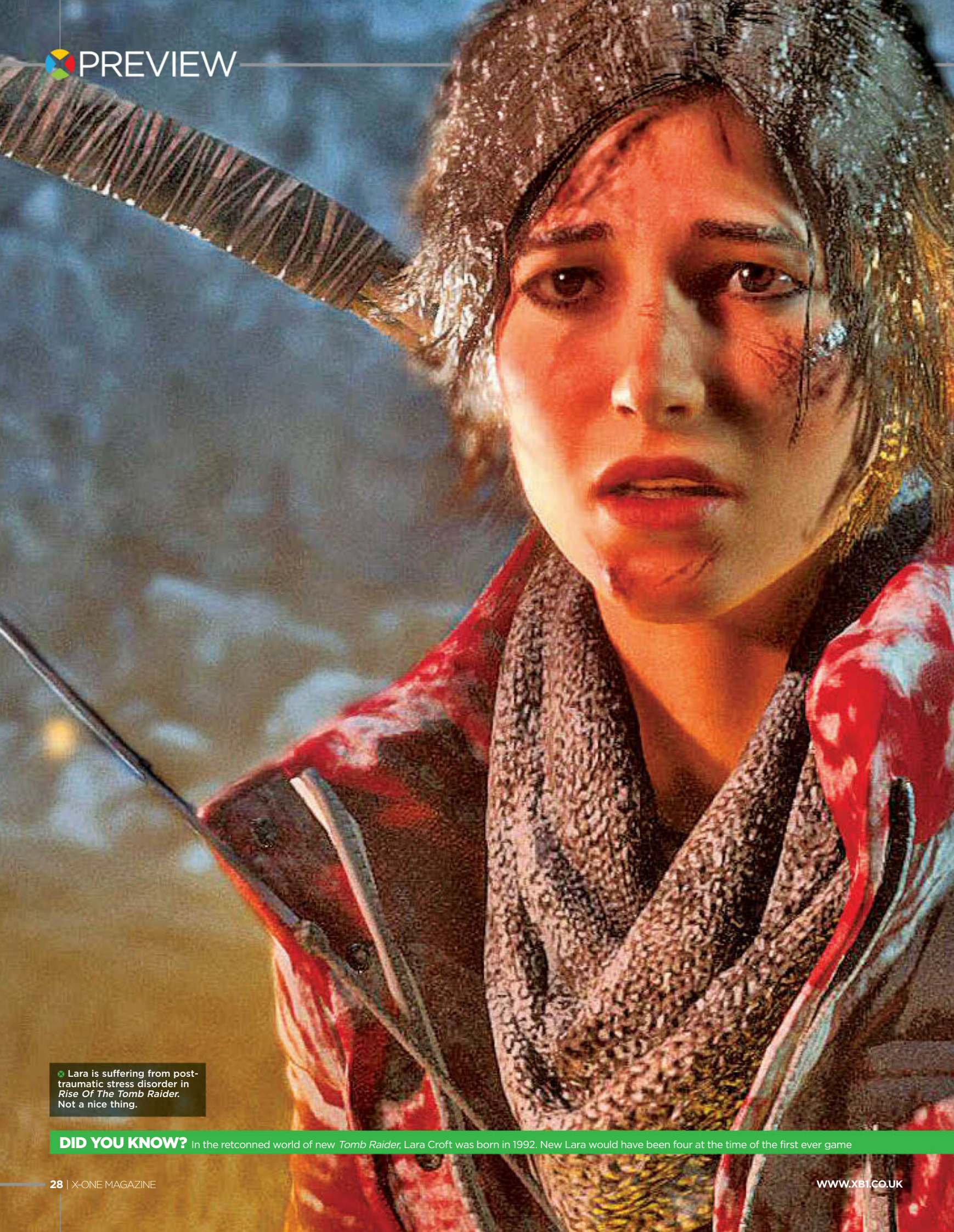
internal pain for the last two-plus years. From here until launch we are continuing to test internally across a broad group within the studio and then across the larger Xbox organisation to make sure we are having consistent tests with how our services and matchmaking systems work. I think the beta was really helpful in that it allowed us to get out to a large group of players and across many different regions and that gave us some fantastic data that we will be able to use as we continue to develop the game. But our focus is on delivering the best multiplayer experience for *Halo* when we launch later this year.

**These all new Spartan Abilities... are they going to be what Master Chief will be battling when he goes up against Agent Locke and his all new Spartan Vs in the campaign?**

The Spartan Abilities for us are really about trying to take the core capabilities of what a Spartan has within their suit and bring them to life within the game. You can see some of the abilities are playing off of things that were there in *Halo 4* – with the thrusters pack – and then other things are just a natural evolution of how a Spartan should be able to move through a battlefield. We are really excited about the heightened level of mobility it gives players and the way it that it allows them to approach combat from many different perspectives; it gives them more tactical options as they are approaching combat. We love that.

• **JOSH WEST**

**HOW'S IT LOOKING?** We've played *Halo 5: Guardians* and reckon it's one of the best in years. 343 might be in lockdown, but it's only a matter of months now, and we can't wait.



❖ Lara is suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder in *Rise Of The Tomb Raider*. Not a nice thing.

**DID YOU KNOW?** In the retconned world of new *Tomb Raider*, Lara Croft was born in 1992. New Lara would have been four at the time of the first ever game

# RISE OF THE TOMB RAIDER

Once again offering the chance to run around shooting wolves in the face

## DETAILS

### PUBLISHER

Microsoft Studios/  
Square Enix

### DEVELOPER

Crystal Dynamics

### CREDITS

Legacy Of Kain:  
Defiance [2003]  
Tomb Raider:  
Legend [2006]  
Tomb Raider [2013]

### PLAYERS

1

### KINECT?

N/A

### SMARTGLASS?

N/A

### RELEASE DATE

Q4 2015

### WEBSITE

[www.tombraider.com](http://www.tombraider.com)

### TWITTER

@tombraider

## ALSO ON

### XBOX 360

As you'd expect, there hasn't been much talk of the 360 version. Expect the same features, but nowhere near as pretty.



Crystal Dynamics' rescue mission has extended its area of effect: first the studio wanted to bring beloved videogaming icon Lara Croft back from the brink, now it wants to help Xbox One get the upper hand in the ongoing battle for console dominance - the former has been a huge success so far, but will the latter, in the form of this year's *Rise Of The Tomb Raider*, continue the pattern?

Early signs are very positive, with *Rise* following on from the events of 2013's extremely well-received reboot. Lara is still younger than the demi-character we were introduced to in 1996, but she's grown since her experience on the island of Yamatai. She's also somewhat traumatised and pretty depressed. Though you would be too if you had to battle an immortal queen trying to possess the body of your best friend.

This Lara is one of knowledge, and with knowledge comes preparedness. No longer is she shocked when she kills for the first time, or apologising to a deer she has to impale with an arrow - she's still young, but Lara is more world-weary than before. With her newfound knowledge - and confidence - come new elements in *Rise Of The Tomb Raider*. You'll be crafting new survival gear, exploring more tombs and battling more baddies this time around.

Why yes, we did say 'exploring more tombs' - for the titular activity that was rather absent in the last game, bar the optional sidequests, is back in a big way for *Rise Of The Tomb Raider*. Crystal ▶

## HIGH FIVE

### 1 BATTLE-READY

She's in her early 20s, but Lara already has a massive body count in the bag. Rise will see those numbers... well, rise, as she takes on human, animal and other opponents.

### 2 HUNTER

Last time she cried over killing a deer, but now she's a little more experienced, we're expect her to cry with delight as she massacres rare Siberian Tigers.

### 3 MAPS ARE FOR LOSERS

One great joy of all *Tomb Raider* games is exploration, and *Rise Of The Tomb Raider* looks like it will scratch that particular itch.

### 4 PIMP MY ICEPICK

Upgrades worked really well last time around, so it's good to see Crystal Dynamics is focusing on this area, offering players more choice.

### 5 SPOOKY GHOSTS

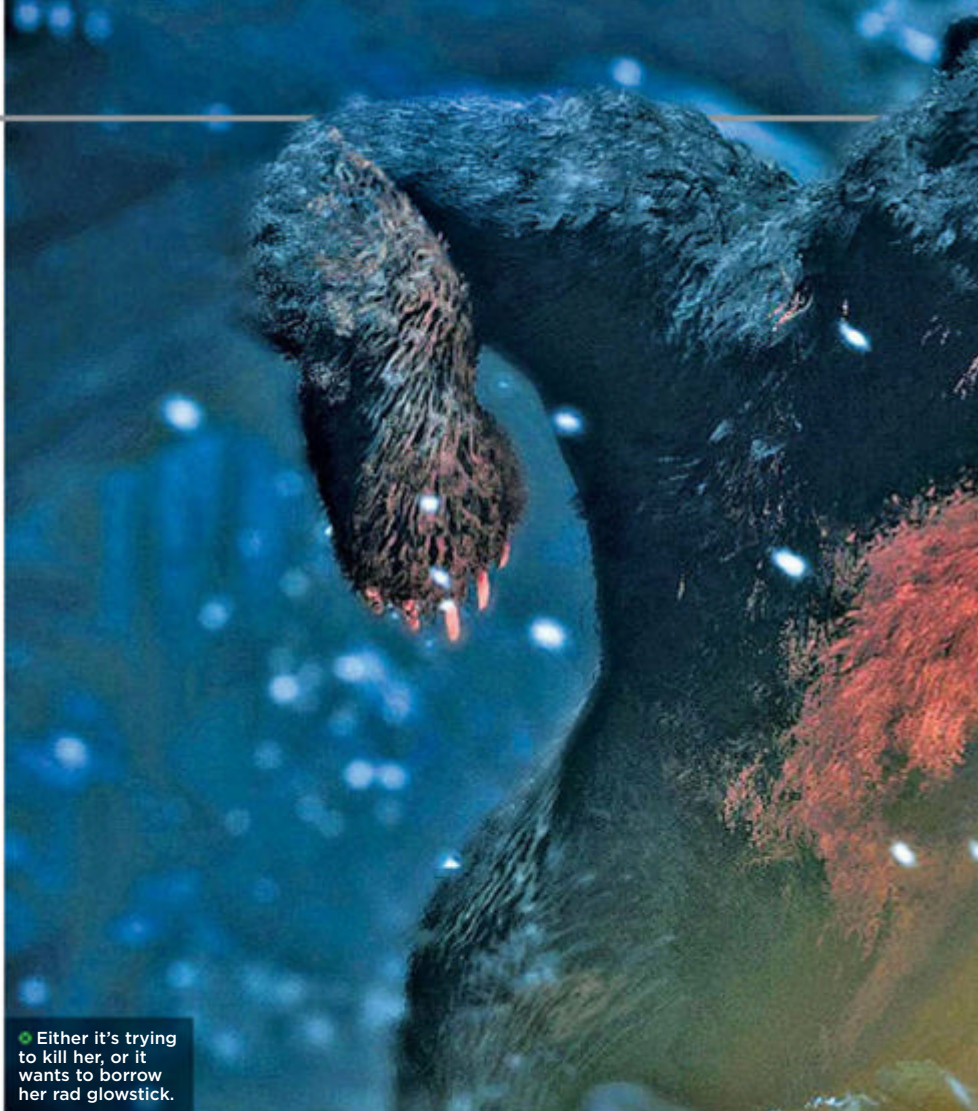
It came as no surprise to series veterans to see an immortal sun goddess appearing in the last game. Expect more of these supernatural elements in *Rise*.

Crystal Dynamics has been talking up the inclusion of tombs (and raiding) for its latest game, and with the exploration of ancient burial places comes, of course, puzzles. We're not looking at the exercises in pure illogical irritation a la *Tomb Raider* '96, instead with something more closely resembling the more modern head-scratchers and tests of pad-based dexterity being offered up.

Crystal Dynamics has, to be fair, said it wants to challenge players, but not alienate the 'average' player. Admittedly if you're reading this magazine, you're unlikely to be an average player, but the point stands. There's also the actual exploration aspect to take into account, and with Crystal Dynamics touting an updated traversal system – something it has concentrated on a lot and that includes more upgradeable, changeable elements than last time around – it sounds like those who were angry or just confused as to why there wasn't a huge focus on tombs and/or raiding last time around will be happier.

But it's not going to be as simple as just walking up to these tombs and knocking on the door – Lara will have to defeat different animal guardians on her way to scratching that archaeological itch. Rather than just your regular bears/wolves/monkeys, these guardians will be tough hombres – and if you've not specced yourself up to the right level, you're going to be running away with your (pony)tail between your legs.

But there's no need to fear all of the animals in *Rise Of The Tomb Raider*, because Lara is still the fauna-murdering killer we all know and love – yes folks, hunting makes its return. This time there are a couple of twists, though, like weather coming into play as snowfall hides tracks, and a day/night cycle only seeing certain animals come out at certain times. It doesn't sound insanely



Either it's trying to kill her, or it wants to borrow her rad glowstick.

**“Lara will have to defeat different animal guardians on her way to scratching that archaeological itch”**

in-depth, but it adds that extra dimension to what was already a fun – if slightly gruesome – element of the last game.

But what's the point of all this exploring, raiding, guardian animal fighting and hunting? Story time! Lara finds herself struggling through the post-traumatic stress of having battled the previously-mentioned immortal queen, and as a way of combating this she invests herself in finding out about other immortality myths. One in particular catches her eye – the lost (invisible, actually) city of Kitezh: a city who only those pure of soul can gain access to, according to Russian legend. While we doubt it will see Lara ending the game immortal, it is a nice enough excuse to slap her into the frozen mountains of Siberia and slather a load of game-flavoured goodness all over it.

But the last *Tomb Raider* was big on its story as well as said gamey goodness, and *Rise Of The Tomb Raider* will be continuing this aspect – writer Rhianna Pratchett is back on board. She has said that this time around we'll find a Lara shaken by the good and bad things she found herself doing on Yamatai, and she'll be backed up by another cast of supporting characters – though one smaller than in the last game, in order to give each individual more time to grow as a personality. Does that mean we'll be crying when they inevitably die? Probably not, but hey.

## GEAR UP

LARA'S MORE PREPARED THIS TIME AROUND, SO WHAT ARE HER STAPLES?



### FIREARMS

Guns, guns, guns

While there is focus on more 'natural' hunting/killing methods in *Rise*, Lara does still have access to firearms. Does this mean sections of the game will devolve into mindless blaster territory? Probably – but it's always nice to have that as a palette cleanser.



### A (FEW) TRUSTY BOW(S)

Byzantine Recurve and others

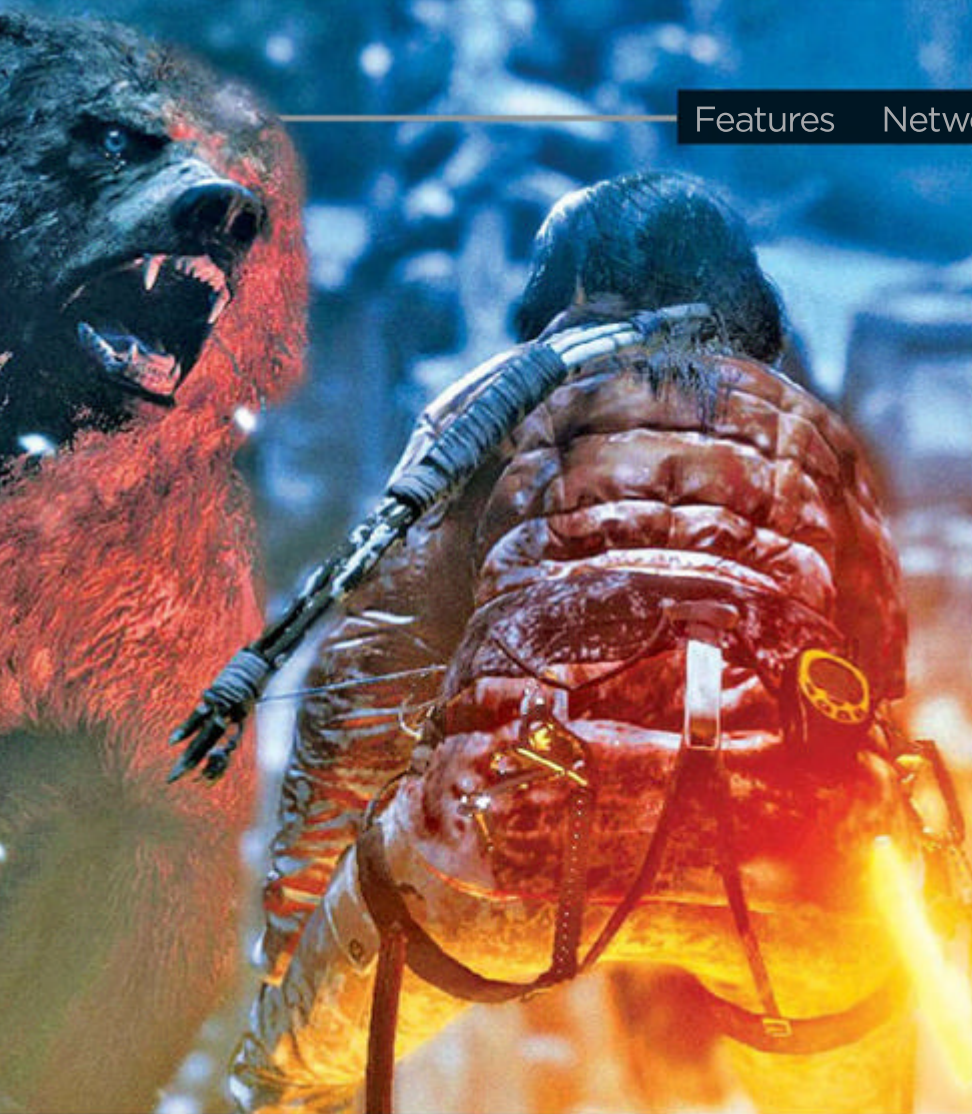
The bow in the last *Tomb Raider* might have initially felt a bit flavour of the month-y, but it soon proved itself to be one of our favourite weapons in recent memory. So it's no surprise that *Rise Of The Tomb Raider* will see multiple bows to choose from.



### DOUBLE ICE-PICKS

Pick one, Pick two

Just like the bows, it seems someone at Crystal Dynamics realised players rather liked the ice pick in the last game and so decided to up the pick-ante. Yes folks, we'll be able to traverse to our heart's content with double-ice-pick action!

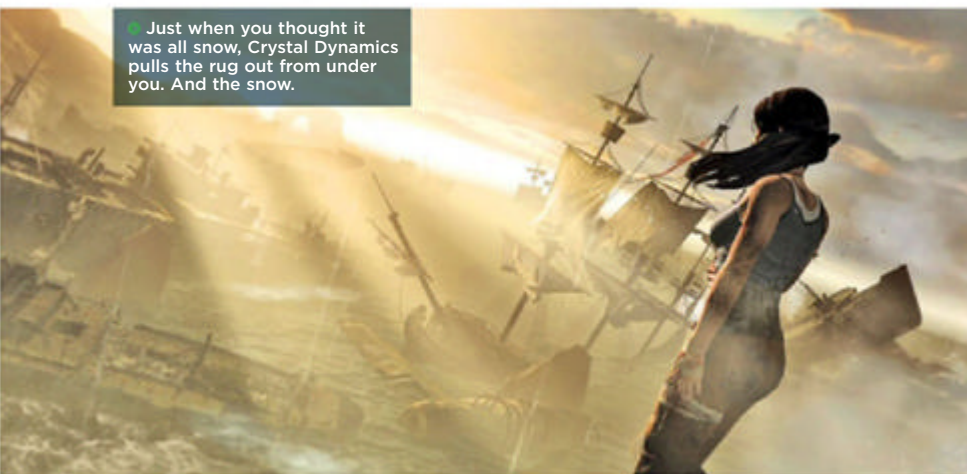


## X MORE OF THIS, PLEASE

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT THE ACTUAL NAME OF THE GAME: A GOOD THING



There were tombs last time around – as well as Lara's quip of "I hate tombs", tee hee – but *Tomb Raider* of 2013 really didn't feature that much actual raiding of tombs in its main story. Fortunately it sounds like that feature – both a mainstay of the series and a compelling aspect of the games – is making a comeback in *Rise*.



Just when you thought it was all snow, Crystal Dynamics pulls the rug out from under you. And the snow.



Lara is wise beyond her years, thanks to a close encounter with an immortal sun goddess. Of course.

And there are two distinct names you might be seeing pop up in relation to *Rise Of The Tomb Raider*'s actual development, rather than the story – Tore Blystad and Nate Wells. The former was at IO Interactive, while the latter arrived at Crystal Dynamics from Naughty Dog – and both have very impressive CVs. There's still a few months of work left on the game, so hopefully these two devs can bring their experience and talent to the game – the *Hitman* and *Uncharted* series' would be two fantastic ones to crib from, after all, with a combination of cold-hearted murder and jaunty adventuring.

There seems to be an odd backlash against the *Tomb Raider* reboot, as if it wasn't a great game or didn't deserve the attention it had lavished on it. Frankly, that's daft – it was a brilliant, exciting and well-crafted adventure and a fine restart of a beloved series. As long as *Rise Of The Tomb Raider* is half the game its forebear was, we'll surely be looking at an essential Xbox One exclusive. As long as there isn't *too much* focus on the supernatural elements, at least.

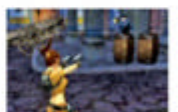
**X IAN DRANSFIELD**

**HOW'S IT LOOKING?** Crystal Dynamics genuinely hasn't made a bad *Tomb Raider* game in the nine years since it took over the franchise. If that changes for *Rise Of The Tomb Raider*, we'd be very surprised.

## PREVIOUSLY



**1 TOMB RAIDER**  
A triumphant return for a series we all thought we didn't care about any more.



**2 TOMB RAIDER: LEGEND**  
Core Design tried to ruin Lara, but she was rescued – by Canadians, no less.

# FINAL FANTASY XV

Once more with feeling

## DETAILS

### PUBLISHER

Square Enix

### DEVELOPER

In-house

### CREDITS

Final Fantasy  
Type-0 HD [2015]  
Final Fantasy XIII [2009]  
The Last Remnant [2008]

### PLAYERS

1

### KINECT?

TBA

### SMARTGLASS?

TBA

### RELEASE DATE

Q3 15

### WEBSITE

finalfantasyxv.com

### TWITTER

@finalfantasy



This time. That's what fans of *Final Fantasy*

should be thinking when it comes to the next iteration of the maligned franchise, but

honestly we'd understand completely if you weren't. Let's face it, *FFXIII* wasn't exactly the return to form gamers wanted – but missteps are a necessary part of growth, and in that regard we can only assume *Final Fantasy XV* will be the best one in a long time. For one thing, it seems Square Enix is making a concerted effort to take on board criticism, whizz that straight back into the game it is making and remember what it is that made the series such a huge name in the first place.

Take, for example, the world that's just waiting for you to explore. We've already seen the road trip nature of the storyline in action, but now it's become clear just how free you are to hop out, set up camp and take on some beasties – and these really are a tough set of monsters. They're not just creatures that pop up randomly, either, you'll see them wandering the wilderness, grazing or running or sleeping or, well, anything that these experience point piñatas might do before you come in and hack them to bits. These fiends might vary in size, but they certainly offer up a greater visual threat than any *Final Fantasy* game before – whether it's large, ox-like creatures charging you down, or towering titans with feet larger than the gang's black, open-top ride. There have always been 'big' monsters to battle in *Final Fantasy* games, but never have we seen anything on a scale like this. And that's

saying nothing of the summonable beasts, which Noctis – the playable character – alone can summon after defeating them; side-quests and hidden summons just like *Final Fantasy VIII*, anyone? Let's hope so.

Of course there are extra things to do within the world too that, if you're playing the demo included in *Final Fantasy Type-0 HD*, you really should try out. Hidden caves contain secret treasure, and a host of tougher monsters. With a world this large, knowing there are things to do off the beaten track will no doubt get players keen to search every nook and cranny. Hell, just look at *FFXIII*; once you actually reached the expansive wilds of Gran Pulse and unlocked the intricacies of the combat system it became a pretty good game. That's something Square Enix will need to remember with *XV*: don't keep us waiting to get to the good stuff. Everyone knows an RPG is as much about the extras bundled in as it is about compelling battle systems and intricate stats-based levelling up, after all.

Just as well you'll have a heap of things to do, then. Fishing and cooking are just some of the diversions Square Enix has detailed so far, mini-games intended to give you something other than grind for experience when you're out and about – and the better Ignis' cooking skill, the

more benefits you'll get from it. Exploring might seem like such a trivial thing to be excited for, too, but the town that Square Enix has now shown off already looks rich with distractions. This is going to be one of the core locations for the first half of the game, and it is even promised that NPCs are driven by their own AI. We're hopeful it suggests there will be a greater depth to

not only our four main heroes, but the rest of the characters. And, if nothing else, the reveal of that town shows a setting that more resembles that of the excellent *Final Fantasy VIII*, to give us even more hope. There are still (massive) question marks over this action-based, one-character combat and just how well it'll work, or even how much that might

appeal to series' fans, but for now Square Enix is making all the right noises with this next iteration. Either we've fallen for the trap once more – hell, we were as excited for *Final Fantasy XIII* as you were – or this time it really will be the *Final Fantasy* game we've been hoping for.

ADAM BARNES

“That's something Square Enix will need to remember: don't keep us waiting to get to the good stuff”

**HOW'S IT LOOKING?** Graphically there isn't much that can touch *Final Fantasy XV* – and we're told it'll only get better looking, too – but now more is revealed in terms of gameplay we can begin to dream again.

## LADS ON TOUR

MEET THE GROUP YOU'LL BE TRAVELLING WITH



### NOCTIS LUCIS CAELUM

Hair colour: Black

Eye colour: Blue/red

Weapon of choice: All of them

Position in group: Boss

Noctis might seem like your typical moody *Final Fantasy* protagonist, but we're told our sole playable character will be distinctive and strong. He can use any kind of weapon, has telekinesis and is the only one who can summon monsters. He's also heir to the kingdom of Lucis, so – you know – don't mess with him.



### IGNIS STUPEO SCIENTIA

Hair colour: Light brown

Eye colour: Green

Weapon of choice: Katana

Position in group: Driver, chef

If you didn't gather by the 'Scientia' bit of his name, Ignis is the smart one of the group and – as is befitting of bespectacled stereotypes – is therefore serious and level-headed. He's the strategist for the group, and will be the de facto driver if you – as Noctis – don't fancy doing so yourself.



### GLADIOLUS AMICITIA

Hair colour: Black

Eye colour: Amber

Weapon of choice: Greatsword/Fists

Position in group: Bodyguard

Here's your 'cheerful big guy', the sort of chap who – despite his imposing physique – is actually a lovable sort. Alongside his ability to wield the heaviest swords, however, he's also fond of fist-fighting, and even has the ability to powerbomb his enemies. As a result, he's automatically our favourite.



### PROMPTO ARGENTUM

Hair colour: Blonde

Eye colour: Blue

Weapon of choice: Guns

Position in group: Comic relief

Prompto is contrary; blonde where the others are dark-haired, maintains a jokey attitude toward their predicaments and isn't actually part of the Royal Circle – he's an outsider of sorts. He also favours the use of firearms, despite their ban in Noctis' kingdom of Lucis – good to see the prince is picking his friends well.



✔ Yes, that is a screen-filling bad guy you'll have to fight. It's likely to be a boss fight of some kind, but it looks to be the most exciting battle in *FF* history.

## HIGH FIVE

### 1 ROAD TRIPPIN'

The main focus for *FFXV*'s story is that of a journey, a simple, timeless storytelling mechanic that should help prevent the game becoming bogged down in nonsense.

### 2 GANG WARFARE

The four characters you've seen in every clip or screenshot are the only ones in your party; again, for that road trip vibe but also to make us care a little bit more.

### 3 AIRSHIP MASTER

Cid has long been a series tradition, but this time around he's a little different. Mostly because he is now an upbeat her. She's the group's mechanic, it turns out.

### 4 CHOCOBO PLAINS

You'll be able to rent a ride on a Chocobo from any of the towns you'll visit, if you were worried the car might replace that thrill. Hopefully *that* tune will return, though. We're sure it will.

### 5 TAKE COVER

In a weird move, there will be pieces of cover where you'll be able to take refuge from enemies to recover health. It sounds abhorrent, but then it's not really all that different to a save point.

**YOU KNOW?** The game was originally announced almost a decade ago at E3 2006 and was to be part of the *Final Fantasy XIII* series

✔ This is Luna. Her name is sadly all we know about her, but she's important to the game's plot. Note: Luna means 'moon' while Noctis means 'of the night'. Just saying.





“Does *RIDE* have the potential to become *Forza Motorsport* on two wheels?”

Mastering Milestone's racing games is an ultimate gaming challenge. Take a corner wrong and you'll be straight on the floor.

**DID YOU KNOW?** Milestone is including over 100 bikes in *RIDE*, forming a vast collection of Superbikes, Supersports, Naked, and Historical for you to race

# RIDE

Who'd have thought staying on a bike would be so difficult?

## DETAILS

### PUBLISHER

PQube

### DEVELOPER

Milestone

### CREDITS

MotoGP 13 [2013]  
WRC 4 World Rally  
Championship [2013]  
MXGP [2014]

### PLAYERS

1-TBC

### KINECT?

No

### SMARTGLASS?

No

### RELEASE DATE

20 April

### WEBSITE

ridevideogame.com

### TWITTER

@PQGames



Milestone is the sort of developer that we truly respect. Not for its contribution to building the Xbox platform or to the wider gaming industry – like we might Turn 10 or Bungie – but because it knows what it does best, and refuses to buckle in the face of adversity. And when we say adversity, we mean people on Reddit moaning that its games are too difficult.

You see, Milestone's jam is simulation racers. It likes to dive into the rally and superbike corners of motorsport, and create the ultimate racing experiences. They often require you to have an almost spiritual connection with your Xbox gamepad, nudging the triggers and gliding your fingers over the thumbsticks with instinctual precision. *RIDE* – Milestone's first attempt at bringing superbike simulation to the Xbox One – is no different. Is it as exclusive as always? Hells yes it is, but that's part of its charm.

If you've ever had the opportunity to lay your hands on a *MotoGP* game in the past, *RIDE* will feel familiar, though Milestone has fine-tuned many of the more irksome mechanics. The variety bikes stick tightly to the tracks and the pushing through corners at speed don't feel as erratically unforgiving as it has done in the past.

So, does *RIDE* have the potential to become *Forza Motorsport* on two wheels? We aren't quite convinced. True to Milestone form, the overall



presentation could do with a little more polish. While it's been given a welcomed coat of next-gen paint; the techy sim and bike customisation aspects of *RIDE* re still monstrously mind warping. Unless you know bikes better than you know yourself, you may struggle to understand and execute some of the finer details.

But that's why you're buying into this type of racing simulation game, right? If you just want to mess around on a fast bike and tear up some city streets while burning through red lights, play *GTA*. If you want to feel the rumble of a bike engine tearing through your rib cage, if you want to take every corner knowing it could be the last your little virtual driver ever sees, then there's *RIDE*.

As with most Milestone racing games, we'll have to wait until launch to see whether the usual technical glitches and bugs let down the entire experience but, for now at least, *RIDE* is coming together exactly as we expected. A racing simulation that will infuriate and upset the masses, but will give an ever-expanding group of bike fanatics a reason to get up when it's too cold and rainy to don a helmet and ride out on the roads for real.

**JOSH WEST**

**HOW'S IT LOOKING?** *RIDE* won't be for everyone but, like *Project CARS*, it's been built for a certain slice of the racing audience in mind. Tough and unforgiving, *RIDE* might just be the sim you've been waiting for.

# THERE CAME AN ECHO

Execute order on my mark

## DETAILS

### PUBLISHER

In-house

### DEVELOPER

Iridium Studios

### CREDITS

N/A

### PLAYERS

1

### KINECT?

Yes

### SMARTGLASS?

No

### RELEASE DATE

Q2 2015

### WEBSITE

[www.playiridium.com](http://www.playiridium.com)

### TWITTER

@IridiumStudios



Iridium Studios is courting disaster with *There Came An Echo*. Voice commands haven't exactly been an attractive USP for Xbox gamers since Microsoft forced Kinect on launch day Xbox One owners, so why build an entire RTS around using your words to control the flow of battle? The RTS is already a genre traditionally steeped in complex sub-routines, insane key-mapping and unrelenting mouse clicks – it's been notoriously difficult for developers to get RTS' functioning on consoles in the past. So why are we so excited about the imminent ID@Xbox of *There Came An Echo*? Well, not only is it trying something new with the tech, but it is doing it in style.

*There Came An Echo* has been built around voice control and, after getting an opportunity to sample it, we're convinced it has the legs to entertain – even after the initial thrill runs dry. Unlike *Tom Clancy's End War*, Iridium Games' debut has simplified the core mechanics and systems to better function with voice commands. Instead

of directly controlling individual soldiers, you play the role of a commander directing as many as four future soldiers. While it begins with basic commands – such as directing troops to various positions and offering them the opportunity to open-fire on enemy positions – you'll soon be directing the entire flow of battle.

**“It begins with basic commands, but you'll soon be directing the entire flow of battle”**

Controller support is still available, mind, though it's proving easier and more entertaining to bark commands like an overbearing officer. As the complexity and challenge gradually begins to ramp up, you'll find you're able to effortlessly pull off insane flanking manoeuvres and better plans. While controller input means you are

stuck offering individual commands to soldiers, using your voice lets you queue up various activities – such as quickly ordering two troops to lay suppressing fire down, while another two swing into a flanking position – and will only attack “on my mark”. Honestly, there's something truly satisfying to executing a perfect takedown of large enemy forces by uttering ‘mark’ in the gruffest voice possible.

*There Came An Echo* will land on Xbox One this summer, pushed back so Iridium can finish up the PC release, and we've got little reason to doubt that it won't function exactly as intended. That shouldn't be a statement we need to make, but after spending a serious amount of time screaming until we are hoarse at Kinect to record a bloody game clip, we feel it's worth at least a cursory mention.

**JOE WEST**

**HOW'S IT LOOKING?** *There Came An Echo* has come together surprisingly well, and looks to be yet another successful Kickstarter project making the leap to Xbox One.

**DID YOU KNOW?** Wil Wheaton (*Star Trek: The Next Generation*, *The Big Bang Theory*, *The Guild*) is set to star as the lead character

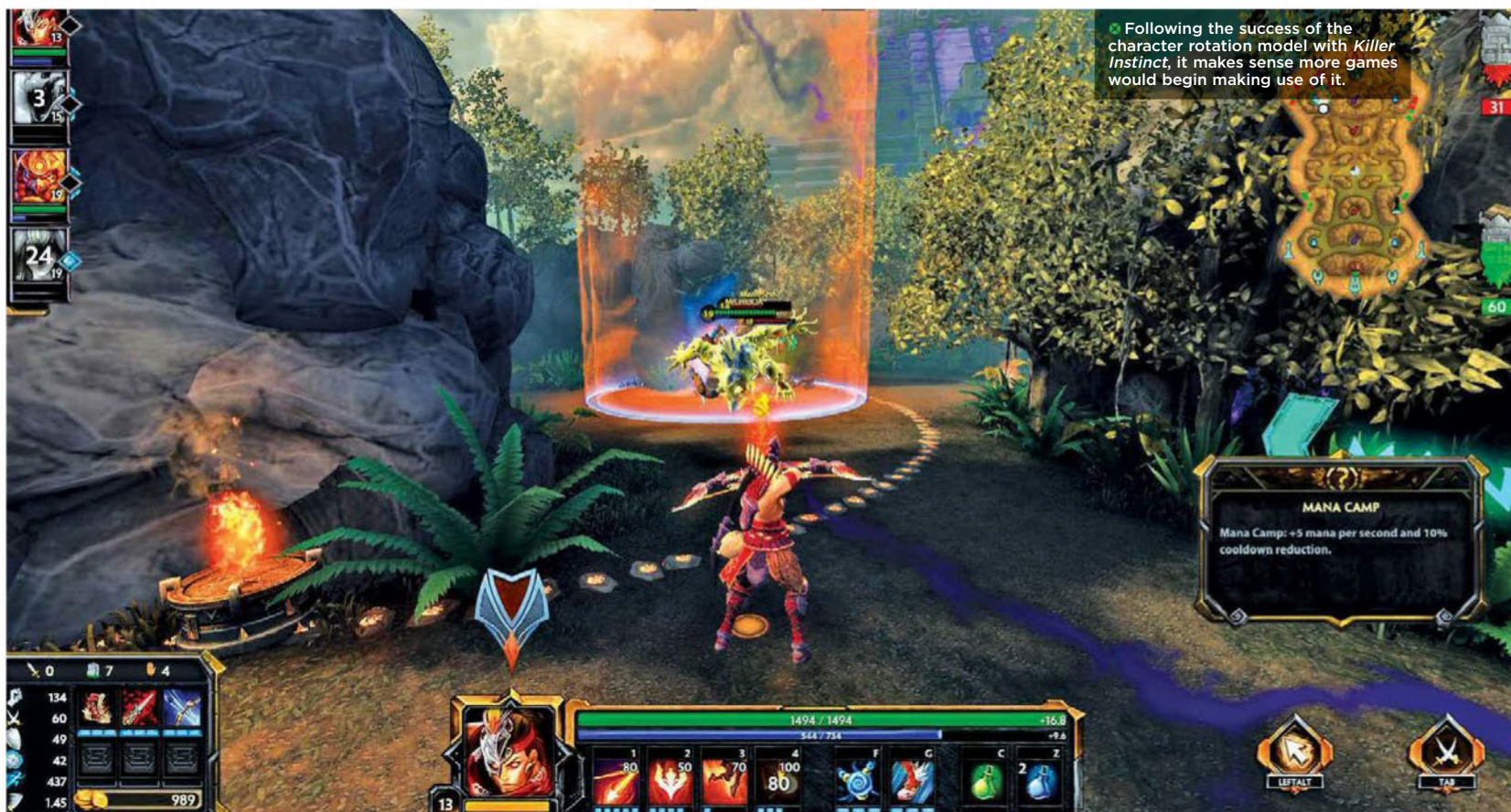


While *There Came An Echo* is built around voice commands, you can use a controller if you like! It takes some of the fun out of it, mind.



Bringing the full MOBA experience over to Xbox One is a risky move, but *Smite* could kickstart a whole new genre here.

**DID YOU KNOW?** *Smite* is free-to-play and will have weekly rotating characters to play as, like *Killer Instinct*. Or you can buy others – it's up to you



Following the success of the character rotation model with *Killer Instinct*, it makes sense more games would begin making use of it.

#### MANA CAMP

Mana Camp: +5 mana per second and 10% cooldown reduction.

# SMITE

Jury's still out on whether this is going to work

## DETAILS

### PUBLISHER

Hi-Rez Studios

### DEVELOPER

In-house

### CREDITS

Global Agenda [2010]

Tribes: Ascend [2011]

### PLAYERS

1-8

### KINECT?

No

### SMARTGLASS?

No

### RELEASE DATE

Q3 2015

### WEBSITE

hirezstudios.com/smite

### TWITTER

@SmiteGame



We've found ourselves in the uncomfortable position of having a 'good news, bad news' situation on our hands. The good? *Smite* is likely to be the closest we get *League Of Legends* on Xbox One any time soon. The bad, well, it isn't nearly as fluid or easy to understand as the aforementioned. Not yet, anyway.

Then again, perhaps that shouldn't come as much of a surprise, *League Of Legends* is one of the most played PC games in the entire world – it has got years of iteration, tweaks and growth behind it. *Smite*, on the other hand, is still in its infancy. It's off to a great start, but there are a few crucial areas that need to be addressed by developer Hi-Rez Studios before it arrives on Xbox One later this year through ID@Xbox.

With the beta scheduled to begin imminently, there's been a noticeable swell of interest around the first next-gen MOBA – that's Mobile Online Battle Arena, for those out of the loop – so we thought we'd get ahead of the curve and dive into the PC version. The studio is even working

with Microsoft to allow account transfers between the two versions, so what's the harm? You can even hook a 360 controller up to the PC to get a solid idea of what to expect from the upcoming free-to-play game. Unlike a standard MOBA game, *Smite* ditches the isometric view and drags the action into third-person perspective.

Except the cover system and horrific chainsaw violence has been replaced by tight teams of five having to work in tandem across three lanes, destroying defensive towers, managing NPC enemy movement and killing other player-controlled heroes to find victory.

It works well, and better still, using the thumbsticks didn't seem to put us at a disadvantage – go suck it, PC master race. Your character moves fluidly across the map, standard hero attacks are mapped to the triggers and the special abilities –

that utilise mana and can be upgraded as you level up through games – are activated via the face buttons. While we've often had concerns as to how something like *LOL* or *DOTA* would function with a gamepad, *Smite* handles perfectly. In fact, we can't see any reason why *Smite* on

Xbox One won't have a huge impact on the competitive eSports scene to a similar fever-pitch degree as its PC brethren.

So, what's the problem? Well, it's immensely confusing to play unless you know the language.

Hell, even if you do know the language it's a difficult game to crack. With its rotating free-to-play characters and insane wealth of options for premium characters, it's initially very difficult to know what character you should be selecting or playing – the learning curve is steep, and it's likely to turn many off before they have the chance to learn the genre's nuances.

It isn't just about selecting a character that looks cool or has super sweet powers; each has a different role integral to the team. Certain characters need to manage the jungle – that's the space in-between the lanes – and there are specific character types that need to be managing, dominating and supporting others in specific lanes. And, to be frank, the community isn't that helpful, or particularly accommodating, to new players. But you've been on the internet, right? That's what it's like. In a MOBA, dying is as bad as walking up to your team-mates and spitting in their faces.

This might be different on Xbox One, admittedly. This is essentially a new genre for console owners to get their heads around, so everyone will be learning the rules, language and play style together. But Hi-Rez needs to be aware of our short attention spans and streamline the entire experience, while making sure that the camera, menu systems and mechanics on some of the advanced characters translate properly to the environment.

**JOSH WEST**

**“We can't see any reason why Smite on Xbox One won't have a huge impact on the competitive eSports scene”**



Smite isn't the loveliest looking game on Xbox One, but some nice particle effects and a smooth frame-rate make all the difference.

## COMMUNITY REACTION



"I'm signing up the beta and will make a judgement then, excited tho"  
@LethalK1llah88

"If this opens the floodgates then awesome, I want League Of Legends on Xbox!"  
@ROckLue



"I don't know if I can be bothered with it, the PC version seemed so confusing."  
Jane Clarke

"It works awesomely with a gamepad on PC, but the roles are a pain to learn. It's not very clear for new players, and the tutorial sucks"  
Sam Austin

## DETAILS

### PUBLISHER

Deep Silver

### DEVELOPER

Reloaded Productions

### CREDITS

N/A

### PLAYERS

1-MMO

### KINECT?

No

### SMARTGLASS?

TBC

### RELEASE DATE

Q3 2015

### WEBSITE

gamersfirst.com/apb

### TWITTER

@apb\_reloaded

# APB: RELOADED

Better late than never



It's taken its sweet bloody time, but *APB* is finally coming to our favourite console. Admittedly, its potential impact has been softened somewhat over the decade as Rockstar has finally dragged *Grand Theft Auto V* into the online space with *GTA Online*, but that doesn't mean we aren't looking forward to diving into another MMO experience on Xbox One. Hell, for those growing ever frustrated by *GTA Online*'s server problems and limitations, this could be exactly what you've been waiting for.

*APB* has gone through a number of incarnations over the years, so let's just try our best to avoid wading back through the development hell that subsequently suffocated *GTA* and *Crackdown* creator David Jones' original vision and look to the future. That future is enveloped in crime, violence

and Xbox Live shenanigans on a global scale. Essentially, *APB: Reloaded* tasks players with taking to the streets of the near-future city of San Paro, as either an Enforcer or Criminal, in a free-to-play PvP experience that can feature up to 100 players. This constant turf war between bad and slightly less bad (look, it might feature cops and robbers, but we know all too well that nobody is truly 100 per cent good on Xbox Live) is where most of the game takes place.

You'll battle over objective points in the shape of banks, convenience stores and public areas; purchase cosmetic items with a mixture of in-game cash and real-world money; make use of the game's immense customisation options and look to become the most notorious player in all of San Paro. *APB: Reloaded* might be three years old now, but that's given Reloaded Productions the time to iron out the bugs, build upon the

original promise and, hopefully, get the graphics and net-code ready for next-gen domination.

*APB: Reloaded* is expected to launch this year, and it's well worth keeping an eye on. The dynamic criminal underworld is something we've been looking forward to sampling for a while now, we just hope it still has the capability to excite and surprise following the release of *GTA Online*. While Rockstar's title is undoubtedly different in its size and scope, it does have a habit of retaining players – and *APB: Reloaded*, by its very nature, will only spring to life if the servers are populated.

**JOSH WEST**

**HOW'S IT LOOKING?** We're hesitant because we've been burnt by *APB* before, but it's hard to stay mad at such an interesting concept. This is a long time coming, but hopefully it'll be worth the wait.

## DEFINE YOUR ROLE

*APB: Reloaded* will initially task you with joining either the Enforcers or Criminals as you begin your life on the right or wrong side of the law. From there, you're fairly free to customise your character to your heart's content. The PC version is well loved, partly because of the huge range of options in cosmetic, weapon and vehicles available.



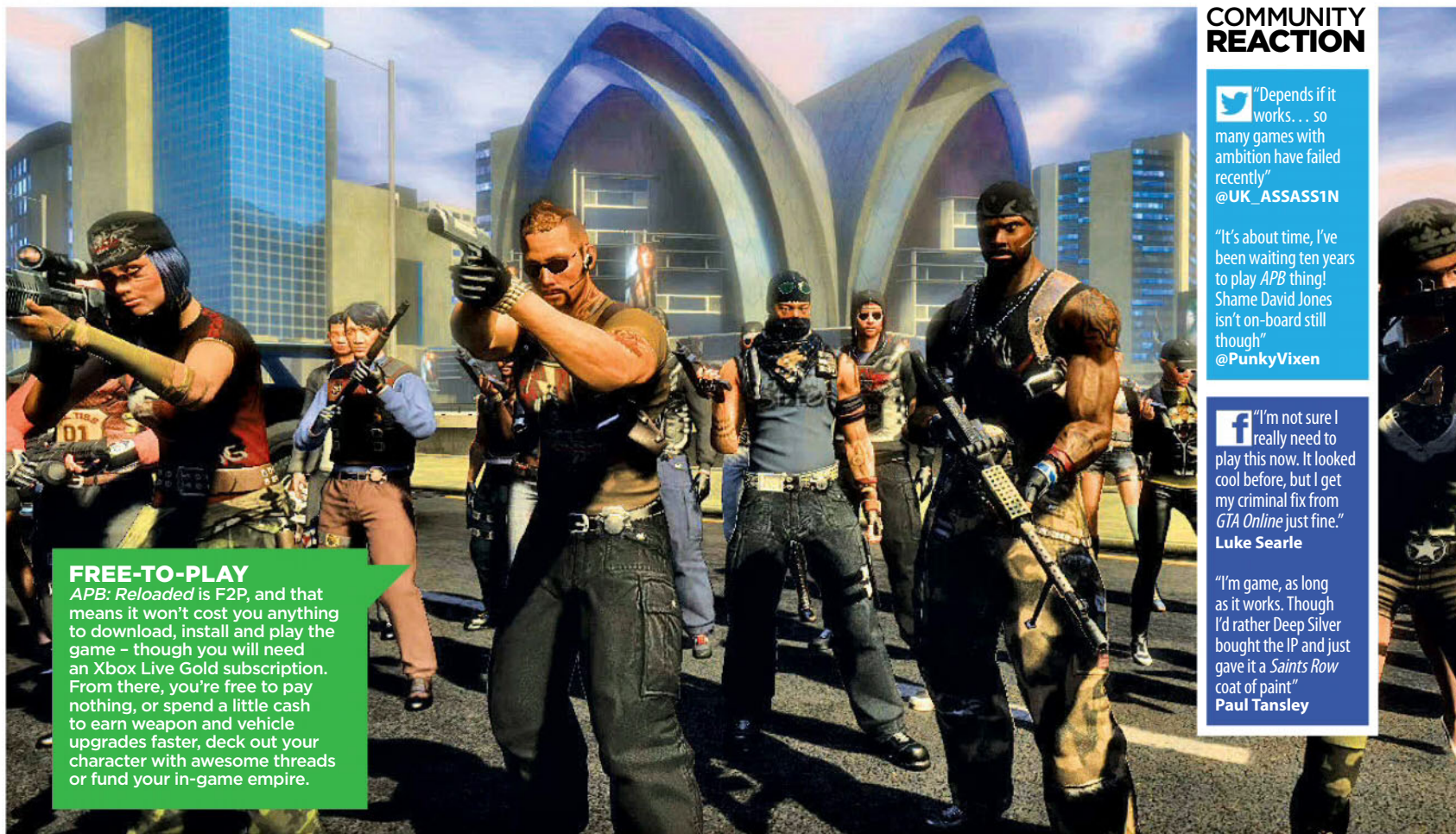


### ALL-POINTS BULLETIN

As a Criminal, you'll need to get a posse and pick a target to assault, rob or overthrow. Once this act is set in motion, the game will begin to dynamically search for Enforcers appropriately levelled and equipped to deal with the threat. Once they've been located, it'll issue an all-points bulletin to either kill or apprehend the Criminals - basically, then it becomes game time.

"The future is enveloped in crime, violence and Xbox Live shenanigans on a global scale"

**DID YOU KNOW?** *APB: Reloaded* first arrived on PC in 2011 after Realtime World's *APB: All Points Bulletin* hit legal and financial trouble



### FREE-TO-PLAY

*APB: Reloaded* is F2P, and that means it won't cost you anything to download, install and play the game - though you will need an Xbox Live Gold subscription. From there, you're free to pay nothing, or spend a little cash to earn weapon and vehicle upgrades faster, deck out your character with awesome threads or fund your in-game empire.

### COMMUNITY REACTION

"Depends if it works... so many games with ambition have failed recently"  
@UK\_ASSASSIN1N

"It's about time, I've been waiting ten years to play *APB* thing! Shame David Jones isn't on-board still though"  
@PunkyVixen

"I'm not sure I really need to play this now. It looked cool before, but I get my criminal fix from *GTA Online* just fine."  
Luke Searle

"I'm game, as long as it works. Though I'd rather Deep Silver bought the IP and just gave it a *Saints Row* coat of paint"  
Paul Tansley

# MINECRAFT

## STORY MODE

A Telltale Games Series

## MINECRAFT: STORY MODE

After successful stints in the *Borderlands*, *The Walking Dead* and *Game Of Thrones* universes, Telltale is taking on *Minecraft*. "Set in the world of *Minecraft*, the series will feature an original story, driven by player choice," the studio teased. "It will not be an add-on for *Minecraft*, but rather a separate stand-alone product that will premiere in 2015 on consoles, computers and mobile devices." *Minecraft: Story Mode* will be an episodic release with an Telltale look using adapted *Minecraft* assets. We won't be finding out about the mysterious miner Steve; instead, Telltale will apparently look to "mix new characters with familiar themes, in an entirely original *Minecraft* experience, inspired by the *Minecraft* community."

## PLANETSIDE 2

XBOX ONE

"Can't wait to make Xbox games," revealed John Smedley, president of Daybreak Game Company. That might not be a studio name you're familiar with, and that's because it is made up of the former Sony Online Entertainment group - responsible for games such as *EverQuest*, *PlanetSide*, *DC Universe Online* and the recently released *H1Z1*. So what does this mean for Xbox One owners? It means that we might finally start getting access to a library of fantastic MMO-like experiences.

And *PlanetSide 2* is the game most likely to make the jump to Xbox One from the list. Currently in beta to come to next-generation consoles from PC, the F2P game supports thousands of players in continuous large scale conflict. If you've never played or seen it in action, it's pretty insane and exactly what the Xbox One needs - everyone knows that the gamepad with its impulse triggers is *perfect* for FPS. While it'll likely be a while before the first Xbox One game appears from Daybreak - it needs to figure how to develop for the Xbox, obviously - the studio's progress is well worth keeping a close eye on.



## FORZA MOTORSPORT 6

For the first time in a long while, Turn 10 has its work cut out when it comes to reclaiming pole position in the racing market. *Forza Horizon 2* and *Project CARS* have raised the bar, and now it will be down to *FM6* to answer the questions raised by its predecessor when it launches exclusively on Xbox One later this year. We're expecting the introduction of dynamic weather systems, as well as advancements to the Drivatar tech.



## PHANTOM DUST

The unlikely resurrection of one of Microsoft's most overlooked series'. Action-strategy *Phantom Dust* is returning in 2015, taking a twist on action game conventions as it introduces card-based battling elements into the wild beat-'em-up fray. Players explore a shattered Earth, collecting skills and cards, preparing for missions and epic Xbox Live battles. We just hope the mechanics are simplified; the original was fun, but tough to wrap your head around.

## KINGDOM HEARTS 3

With the hype train for *Final Fantasy XV* finally leaving the station, Square looks intent on going quiet on *KH3*. We aren't going to let that happen, we're too bloody excited about this incredible series finally making its way to Xbox. *Final Fantasy* characters meet Disney heroes for an epic adventure, complete with Disneyland rides introduced as summonable weapons in combat - which sounds as crazy as it does awesome.



## NO MAN'S SKY

The more that Hello Games shows us of the gorgeous *No Man's Sky*, the clearer it becomes that we have literally no idea what's going on. A galaxy of procedurally-generated planets to explore, the systems and inclination in place to do whatever the hell you want in a seemingly endless space. *No Man's Sky* is - for better or worse - going to be unlike anything else. Let's hope the small studio hasn't over-estimated its capabilities on this one; we'd love to see it come together properly as much as you.

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# THE ELDER SCROLLS ONLINE



Words Stephen Ashby

# BEYOND SKYRIM

WE GET AN EXCLUSIVE FIRST LOOK AT THE EPIC ELDER SCROLLS ONLINE ON XBOX ONE

**H**ow do you follow one of the most well-received RPGs of all time? In 2011, we described *The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim* as “one of the finest adventures this generation has seen.” The short answer to that is just two words: with difficulty. The slightly longer, much more accurate answer takes four: *The Elder Scrolls Online*. On 9 June, the prequel to one of the Xbox 360's best games lands on Xbox One after a hefty delay. In fact, we first played the PC version of the game almost 18 months ago. That version was released to the public in April 2014, and we've been waiting for the Xbox One release ever since.

But with that launch just a few months away, we've spoken to ZeniMax, the team behind the MMO, and we can now finally, exclusively, show you the first screenshots of the console version of the game. And guess what? It's looking pretty freaking awesome.

The game unlocks a world that players of previous *Elder Scrolls* titles will certainly recognise – as well as the realm of Skyrim, players can also explore the shores of Morrowind, creep through the dark dungeons of Oblivion, and discover a huge game world that has never been open to gamers. It's by far the biggest *Elder Scrolls* game ever made.

This is, perhaps, to help give gamers enough space to explore. *TESO* is the first multiplayer game in the series – as you progress through the story, you'll encounter other online players, complete challenges with them, battle against them, or join them on quests. For a series that has been decidedly a single-player experience in the past, the jump to MMO is a huge departure, but it also doesn't mean that the single-player experience has completely disappeared.

“We designed the game to be able to be played solo if the player wants to do that – there are many *Elder Scrolls* players who have never before played an online RPG of this type, so we wanted to be sure that option was there,” says Matt Firor, *TESO*'s game director. “The idea is that you can play the game solo, but you'll run into other players while you are doing so, organically join with them, and form groups, join guilds, and learn the joys of interacting and socialising with other players.”

Don't expect to be trekking across the continent to join your friends right from the start, though. When you first begin the game you'll need to pick a race from the nine available, and your choice will decide the area in which you will start your quest. The races are divided up into three factions clashing over the throne of Emperor

# THE ELDER SCROLLS ONLINE

of Tamriel: the First Aldmeri Dominion is made up of High Elves, Wood Elves and Khajiit; the Daggerfall Covenant comprise of Bretons, Redguards and Orcs; and the Nord, Dark Elves, and Argonian make up the Ebonheart Pact. But don't worry if you think you'll be trapped in a small area with nothing to do. ZeniMax has packed so much into the world that your biggest problem will be choosing what to do first.

"There are tons of things to do in Tamriel besides main story quests," explained Firor. "You can explore for chests, delves (mini dungeons), create sellable goods with the crafting system, PvP, and if you wish, engage in criminal activity for fun and profit. You can do all of these simultaneously as you level, or just concentrate on one of them – it's up to you."

All of this is, of course, alongside the levelling system for your character. When you pick a race and customise your character, you'll also need to choose a class. Like any good RPG, you'll have a choice of four – Dragon Knight, Sorcerer, Templar and Knightblade. But no matter which one you pick, *The Elder Scrolls Online* doesn't limit you in what you can equip. So if you're a Sorcerer but you want some extra protection, you can kit yourself out with heavy armour, or you can give the Dragon Knight a bow and a staff if you prefer a long-range option.

This frees you up to do all kinds of things with your character – no matter what kind of player you are, you'll be able to customise them to suit you. And with so much of Tamriel to explore, taking the time to craft the perfect character will be just as addictive as the previous games in the series. Which brings us to the map. Did you play *Skyrim*? That game was pretty big, right? Well, *Skyrim* itself is just one small part of the continent of Tamriel – there are eight other regions for

you to explore. Some of them will be locked from the outset, ready for DLC later in the game's lifespan, but there is still a lot to see. And, while you're contained at first, once you hit level 50 you can cross the borders and start venturing out into more of the game world, including familiar areas you won't have visited since your first Elder Scrolls title.

In fact, even after you hit level 50 and progress onto 'Veteran' class there is an astonishing number of things to do. At that point you start levelling different, you'll face tougher enemies in the new areas you can explore, and find new items and dungeons that only Veterans can delve into. And boy are they tough – you'll likely need a team of other powerful friends if you want to get through them in one piece. Additionally, there's Vampirism and Lycanthropy to play with. That's right, in *TESO* you can literally turn your character into a vampire or a werewolf, like in *Skyrim's* *Dawnguard* DLC, giving your access to new skills, but also adding a range of unique weaknesses. These transformations are technically available at any point in the game, but level 50 is the perfect point to try them out – they will give you a completely new outlook on the game, and new quests to complete.

If you're not getting the picture yet, we'll sum it up for you: *The Elder Scrolls Online* is huge. There's so much to do that you could easily sink weeks if not months into the world and still only scratch the surface. And when we consider that, we can almost forgive ZeniMax for taking so long to finish the Xbox One version. "[It] is a very complex game, technically, and moving from one platform to another involves many moving parts and pieces, including underlying infrastructure, transition to controller-based gameplay, etc," said Firor. "What took the longest, though, was our commitment to continually improve the game – through a series of PC updates over the last eight months – before launching it on console."

These updates are another reason that the game took a while to get the game finished for Xbox One. *TESO* is, of course, an MMO, and as such regular updates are a given. New areas, quests, missions, and items are common with a title like this, but it must be difficult to finish a game when new features are constantly being added. What's great to see is that ZeniMax hasn't been cutting corners when getting the game onto home consoles. Instead, the focus has been on making it a good fit for the controller, which



"If you're a Sorcerer but you want some extra protection, why not equip heavy armour and dive into battle?"

## THE 'FREE-TO-PLAY' QUESTION

HOW WILL THE MOVE TO AN OPTIONAL SUBSCRIPTION MODEL AFFECT THE BALANCE OF THE ELDER SCROLLS ONLINE?

When Bethesda announced it would be making *TESO's* monthly subscription fee optional, the community reaction was mixed. Some welcomed the news that would save them \$9.99 a month, while others questioned whether it would result in a system in which players could spend money to buy better weapons, effectively paying to win.

We asked Matt Firor, game director on *TESO*, for the inspiration behind the decision. "We listened to our customer base, we analysed playing habits, and came to the conclusion that it was time to move to a subscription-optional plan," he said. "And when we made that decision, it just made sense to do it for all platforms."

Instead, players can now pay for the 'ESO Plus' membership – available in 30, 90 or 180-day durations. These will offer access to all DLC, as well as 'character progression bonuses' and a monthly supply of crowns, the in-game currency that is used to purchase consumables, costumes, mounts and pets. You can access all of these without spending money, but it will take time, and of course the DLC will still be available to purchase individually, if you wish.



The game world is huge and varied. From underground caverns to expansive plains, each area feels different and unique



✱ Outside of the main storyline, there are so many things you can do, from venturing into dungeons to becoming a criminal to earn extra cash

## CHARACTER EVOLUTION

TAKE YOUR CHARACTER FURTHER THAN EVER BEFORE  
THANKS TO TESO'S OPEN-ENDED UPGRADES SYSTEM

*The Elder Scrolls Online* is doing something new with its characters – rather than restricting you to a single set of upgrades once you've chosen your class, you are able to kit out your character however you like. This means that, as a Sorcerer, you aren't restricted to casting spells from a distance and running from melee battles if that's not how you want to play. Give your character a sword and some armour and they can fight back. In the new game you'll find that balancing your character's equipment and skills is essential to beating the tougher enemies that you will encounter.



# TAMRIEL ON XBOX ONE

OUR FIRST LOOK AT THE ELDER SCROLLS ONLINE ON CONSOLE

## LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

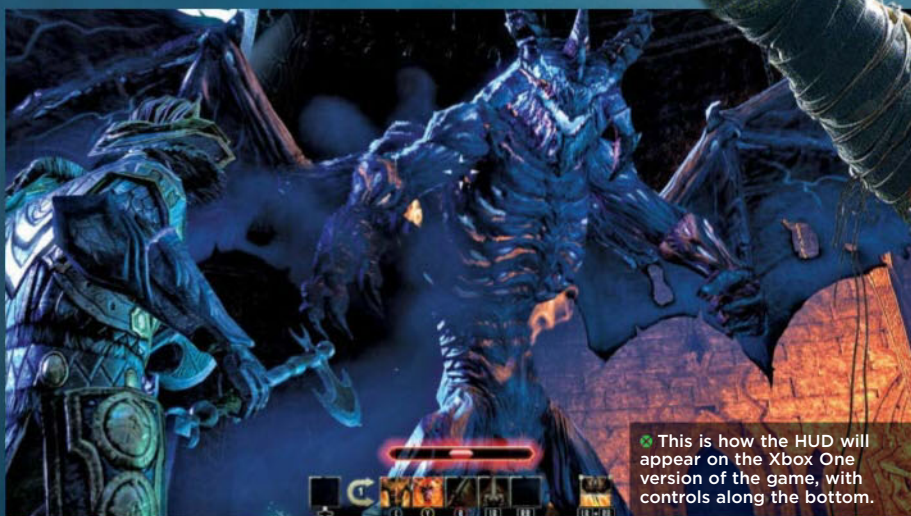
*The Elder Scrolls Online* opens up a huge amount of Tamriel that players haven't seen before, or haven't visited for a long time. The different realms look fantastic.

## TIGER-ON-TIGER ACTION

You'll be able to purchase mounts within the game, including horses, Guars - which are lizard-like creatures - and soon these senche-tiger mounts. Very fancy.

## IN CONTROL

We can exclusively reveal the Xbox One controller layout for *The Elder Scrolls Online* - take a look and familiarise yourself with them all before it's launch in June.



This is how the HUD will appear on the Xbox One version of the game, with controls along the bottom.

This giant lizard might look terrifying, but it is actually one of the mounts you can buy to help you trek across the world faster.



► provides a very different experience to a mouse and keyboard. "At its heart, the game is just the same on console as it is on PC," explains Frior. "But the way the player interacts with the game, the world, and each other has been updated to take advantage of what consoles do best – play with a controller, be able to sit in your living room and read text on the screen, have a UI that is built from the ground up to take advantage of the controller."

We've now got our first good look at what this means thanks to ZeniMax showing us the control setup for the Xbox One. You can take a look at the layout in the image to the left, but *Skyrim* players be warned – things seem to have changed a fair bit from the previous game in the series. We'll wait for our first hands on to see what it means for gameplay, but we're quietly confident that it should feel pretty natural when we pick it up in a few weeks.

For now, we're content just getting our first look at the game on Xbox One. It's looking pretty fantastic thanks to the power that Microsoft's console provides. Perhaps the biggest question, in light of other recent multiplayer releases, is how the servers will hold up when the game goes live on 9 June. If they don't, *TESO's* launch will be tainted and the game could really suffer. And, even more so than *Halo: The Master Chief Collection*, this is one title that can't afford to get the online part wrong. But if it works, it could be the biggest jump forward in gaming for a long time. This is the first proper MMO on Xbox One, and its scale is enormous.

Yes, we've been waiting for this game for more than a year, but as the final release gets close we're becoming more and more confident that it could be an Xbox One classic. Prepare yourself for another epic adventure into Tamriel – this time it's going to be bigger than ever before. ●

"There's so much to do that you could sink weeks if not months into the world and only scratch the surface"



## THE STORY SO FAR...

THE ELDER SCROLLS TIMELINE IS COMPLEX, HERE'S HOW THE NEW GAME FITS IN...

### THE ELDER SCROLLS ONLINE (SECOND ERA 582)

Set 750 years before *Morrowind*, *TESO* is set in a time of chaos and war in which three factions fight over the Ruby Throne. An agent of Molag Bal completes a ritual to merge worlds and give his master more power.



### MORROWIND (THIRD ERA 427)

The deity Dagoth Ur seeks to gain power and break Morrowind from Imperial reign. You must fulfil the seven prophecies of the Nerevarine to become strong enough to defeat Dagoth Ur before he can break free from the Red Mountain.



### OBLIVION (THIRD ERA 433)

After the death of Emperor Uriel Septim, barriers open to Oblivion, a realm in another dimension. Cities are attacked by dark creatures known as Daedra, and you must defeat the enemy forces to close the barriers again.

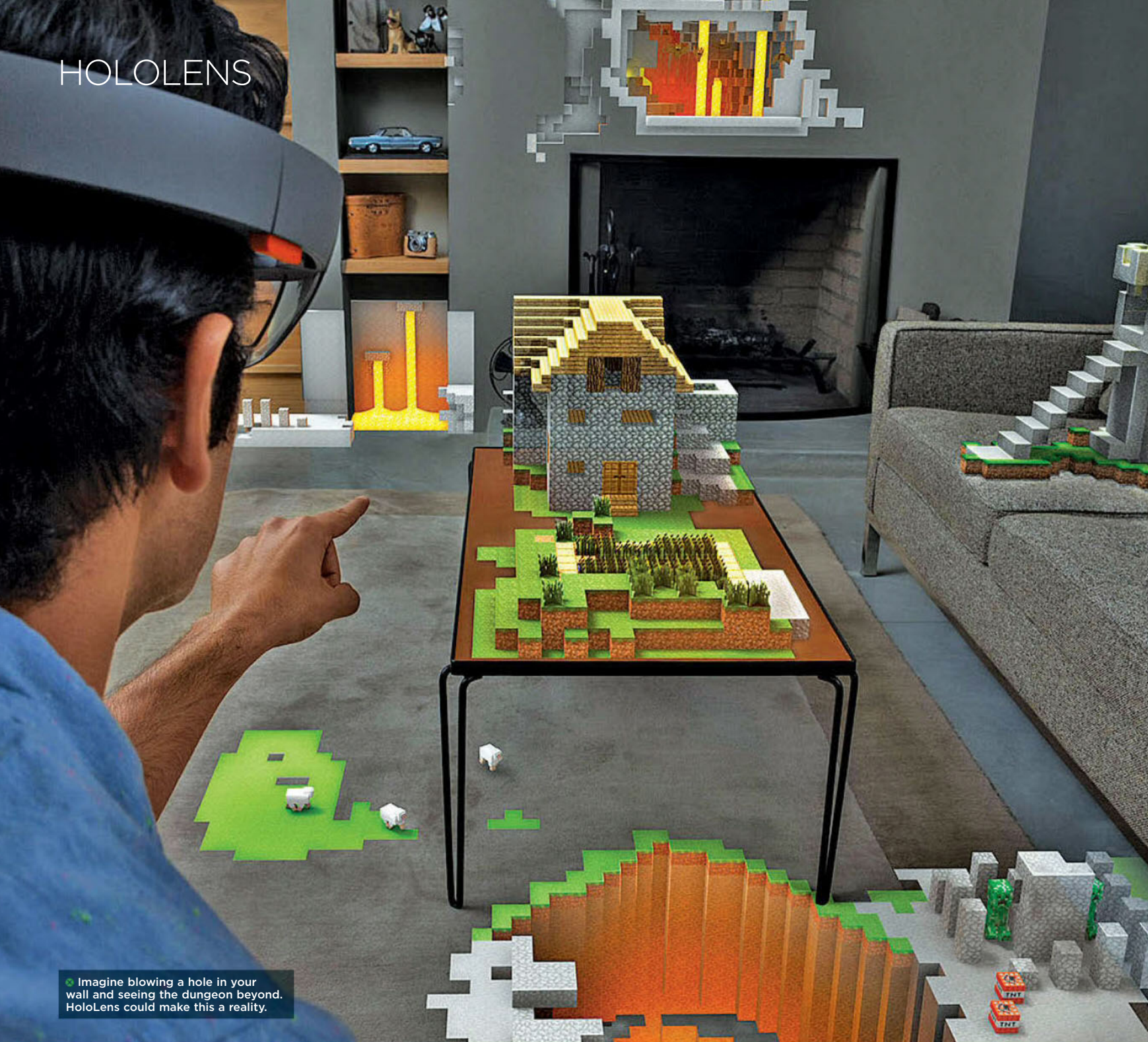


### SKYRIM (FOURTH ERA 201)

The latest of the main games, *Skyrim* takes place almost 1000 years after *The Elder Scrolls Online* in a time of dragons. You gain the powers of a Dragonborn, and must defeat the evil leader of the dragons, Alduin, before he destroys the world.



HOLOLENS



✦ Imagine blowing a hole in your wall and seeing the dungeon beyond. HoloLens could make this a reality.

Words Stephen Ashby

# HOLOLENS

## THE FUTURE OF GAMING?

CAN MICROSOFT'S HOLOGRAPHIC SYSTEM REALLY BE THE NEXT STEP FOR IMMERSIVE VIDEOGAMES?

**H**olographic technology is here at last, and it's going to bring games out of the TV screen and into your actual real-life living room. Yep, you read that right – Microsoft recently demoed its vision of next-generation computing, and it all revolves around holograms. HoloLens is the name given to the headset, which projects 3D images onto the world around you, and lets you interact with them with simple gestures and voice commands.

If this sounds like something out of science fiction, you'd be right. Similar ideas have been portrayed in *Star Trek*, *Star Wars*, and more recently in the 2013 film *Her*. In that movie, a projector created a 3D world in the player's apartment and let them walk with an avatar through a rich game world that came alive around them. But this is much more real than a film. And if Microsoft manages to pull holographic computing off successfully, it could be a huge leap forward for gaming.

## THE POSSIBILITIES

The potential of this kind of device in gaming is enormous. Microsoft made clear in its announcement that the HoloLens is powered by the new Windows 10 system, but with that update integrating Xbox gaming into the PC operating system more than ever before, there's plenty of room for crossover between a PC and an Xbox. During the announcement event, one of Microsoft's hardware demos showed a *Minecraft*-style game. For the player, the game level was projected onto the world around them. Tables and sofas became

part of the landscape, with mountains, trees and rocks literally appearing around them. Animals and enemies wandered around their feet, ready to be poked and prodded. But more impressively, blocks of TNT were lying around, ready for you to grab. These blocks could be flung at walls or dropped onto the floor. When they exploded, they seemed to blow a hole in your actual wall, and revealed a world behind the world. You could peer through and HoloLens gave you the chance to look at an area you'd never seen before.

This was, of course, just an early tech demo, but if you think about what this could do for games, it's incredibly exciting. Imagine ducking behind your sofa – which is a rock in your game – and popping up to shoot enemies across your room. Oh, and your room is actually a jungle. As you duck, the spatial sound system simulates bullets flying past your head, and holographic shards of rock fall around you as the bullets ricochet off your cover.

If that sounds like a little too much effort, instead imagine HoloLens acting as your HUD for *Halo*. Your radar, overshield and ammo could all sit floating in front of your eyes as if you were wearing Master Chief's helmet. You have to admit, that sounds like a pretty cool way of making every player feel like they're inside the game.

But perhaps more exciting is the diverse kind of games that developers could create for the system. With a new canvas to work on, there are all kinds of unique ideas that could be tried. You could play hide and seek with a character in your front room, watching for flashes of colour or footsteps as a character darts from place to place. Or imagine pairing HoloLens with Kinect. With a combination of the two you could



With HoloLens, any wall can become a TV, so you could play games no matter where you were.

“Your radar and ammo could float in front of your eyes like you were wearing Master Chief's helmet”

## THE ANATOMY OF HOLOLENS

### GETTING TO GRIPS WITH THE HARDWARE



**TRANSPARENT LENS**  
Unlike virtual reality headsets like the Oculus Rift, which create a virtual world in an enclosed environment, HoloLens uses a transparent lens and projects images on top of the world around you.

**ADVANCED SENSOR**  
HoloLens uses a series of cameras and sensors on the front of the device to track your room. These also capture gestures you make, so you can control the holograms around you.

**WIRELESS**  
The HoloLens system is designed to be completely untethered, so you can get a complete experience without any connection to a phone or PC. But would games need some extra power?

**SPATIAL SOUND**  
The system uses a spatial sound system to create audio without needing headphones covering your ears, so you can still interact with the outside world.

# HOLOLENS

■ become a monster in a game, with skyscrapers and cities projected around you to destroy. As you stomped around the room, Kinect would track your movements, and HoloLens would create the game world, with fighter jets flying around your head and tiny people running for cover.

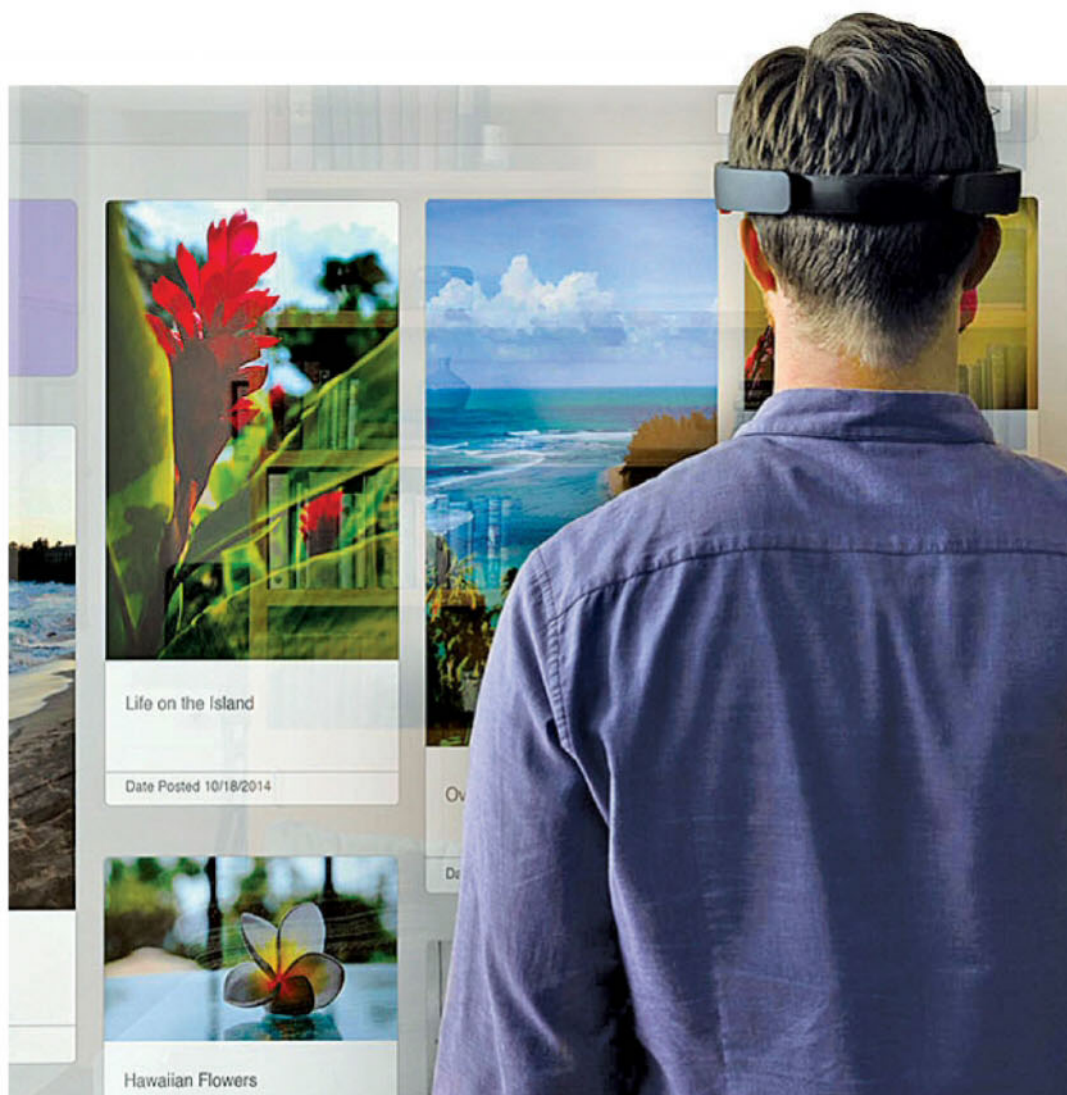
If you don't want to be so active, that's no problem – HoloLens can turn put a TV screen on any wall. All you would need is a controller and a headset and you could play anywhere without needing a TV.

## THE INEVITABLE 'BUT...'

You can't deny that the potential of this project is exciting, but don't expect to be playing holographic games this time next year. HoloLens is still in the early stages of development – the demo units that showed off the *Minecraft* level included a bulky battery pack that users had to carry. There's obviously still a lot of work for Microsoft to do to get the whole thing finished up and ready for the world, and it's going to take some time.

The battery will, perhaps, be the biggest hurdle. If HoloLens is entirely autonomous and doesn't require wires, it will need one heck of a battery to keep it running for more than a couple of hours. Getting the balance right between weight and power is essential; it could be incredibly light but only work for two hours, or it could last for days but be so heavy that it becomes uncomfortable after half an hour.

Once that's right, there's the question of cost. With so much technology packed into such a small space, it certainly won't be cheap. And, while HoloLens may include some powerful computing power, it probably won't have enough graphical grunt for Xbox One games. So would it be an accessory? Probably. And as Microsoft knows from its experience with Kinect,



## CAN HOLOLENS REALLY TAKE DOWN THE COMPETITION?

HOLOLENS IS FACING OFF WITH SOME WELL-ESTABLISHED OPPONENTS IN THE VR REALM, BUT WITH ITS UNIQUE SELLING POINT, CAN IT BEAT ITS TWO BIGGEST RIVALS?

Head-mounted gaming isn't exactly a completely new trend. For a few years now, other developers have been working on their own hardware to take gaming out of the TV and put it right in front of your eyes. Both Oculus Rift and Sony's Project Morpheus are hoping to beat Microsoft to the punch on wearable gaming, and they already have a head start.

But HoloLens isn't really in the same category as these two headsets. With HoloLens, the game is projected onto the world around you using the transparent lens system. Oculus and Morpheus, on the other hand, place screens right in front of your eyes, closing you off from the outside world. Which will work better? It's hard to say right now, but expect to see more of these headsets at E3 in June this year.



### OCULUS RIFT

Development Kits are available right now for Oculus Rift, with a final consumer version release expected this year. A screen inside the device puts the game world right in front of your eyes, and developers are creating dedicated games and mods to make the most of the new tech. At the moment, you still need to be hooked up to a PC to use it, but there are some great hardware add-ons, such as treadmills, that give you a unique experience.



### PROJECT MORPHEUS

Not much was seen of Project Morpheus after its announcement at GDC last year. But Sony gave Morpheus a major presence at this year's GDC at the start of March, with hands-on experiences for those present. The full VR headset was originally designed to work with the PlayStation Move controller, and there have already been 15 games demoed to show what it could do. Can it beat HoloLens? Only time will tell.



HoloLens can be controlled by hand gestures, with the cameras on the front recognising your movements.



Voice control is built into HoloLens - it almost feels like it's been designed as an extension of Kinect

**"If Microsoft can pull off holograms successfully, it could be a huge leap forward gaming"**

selling an expensive (and optional) accessory doesn't ensure success. Is HoloLens destined to become just another gimmick?

Or, even worse, could it become an incredibly niche product? There are a few VR headsets available right now, but none of them are mainstream by any means. Yes, most of them are still in development, but the demand for them simply isn't that high. We would argue that HoloLens has much potential than the likes of Oculus Rift or Sony's Project Morpheus, simply thanks to the way it works with the world around you. But even when those two systems are released, sales are a completely different story. Can HoloLens buck the trend, or will it simply be another plaything of the rich gamer? Would it have a genuine place in your gaming collection?

## THE BOTTOM LINE

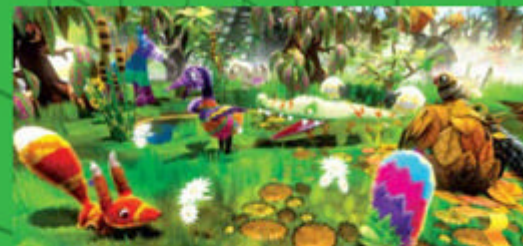
Right now it's hard to say. As we've said several times so far, the system undoubtedly has a huge amount of potential. We're sure that developers could come up with some absolutely stunning ideas to push HoloLens into the homes of millions of gamers. If Microsoft sell it as an accessory to the Xbox One, it would offer something that no other gaming system has ever managed - holographic gaming.

Sure, there are plenty of hurdles. Price. Battery life. Graphical power. But if Microsoft gets the balance right, this could be the biggest leap in gaming that we've seen since the jump into true 3D.

# GAMES WE WANT TO SEE ON HOLOLENS

## VIVA PIÑATA

This world-management game would be ideal for HoloLens. Your floor could become the garden, with piñatas wandering around at your feet as you tend to their needs. It's a perfect fit.



## MICRO MACHINES

This could be the perfect time for a revival of this franchise. The game focused on racing around real surfaces - imaging building your own track on your coffee table, then playing it in full 3D.



## HALO

When you have a holographic headset, why wouldn't it become the inside of Master Chief's helmet? HoloLens could bring the *Halo* HUD to life brilliantly.



## XCOM

The *XCOM* series has always been about tactical gameplay, getting your team perfectly positioned. Imagine the game map on your floor, with you planning out moves as you walk around.



MORTAL KOMBAT X

# MORTAL KOMBAT

GET OVER HERE!

Words Dom Peppiatt



**W**e're playing as Raiden, and we've just grabbed a man by the crotch and electrocuted him. But that's not enough – this is *Mortal Kombat* – so we broke his jaw by swinging our heel into it. The X-Ray cam zoomed up on this, too, and we saw a single tooth fly out of his mouth. *Still* not content, Raiden dug his hand into the man's back flesh, grabbed his spine and electrocuted the doomed komatant through and through. Oh, and just before we pulled off the fatality, we punch his liver to death, too. Raiden's back, ladies and gentlemen, and he is pulling *no* punches.

Raiden's been with *Mortal Kombat* since the beginning, a crazy 22 years ago. But the Guardian of

Earthrealm has seen perhaps the biggest change now – in the game's tenth release, instead of just wailing on your opponents with that crazy across-the-screen lightning dash, or a grapple that *electrocutes their brains*, Raiden has been given three 'Variations' – King Of Storms, Displacer and Thunder God.

"At their core, we want each character to feel the same," explains NetherRealm's marketing and game manager, Ryan Goodman, when we ask him why the studio decided to add this new character-splitting dynamic. "One of the great opportunities we have with Variations is that you can easily maintain the core of a character, but really employ a whole new strategy and fight style to them. That's where this feature becomes

# MORTAL KOMBAT X

► so important – we can make a character play like more of a zoning character in one variation, but [another Variation will allow you] to get in real close and keep the pressure up.”

It's a fantastic addition to a game that's – traditionally – been seen as the more cartoony fighting game by the pro community. It takes away the simple rock-paper-scissors cycle *Mortal Kombat* began life with. But what pushed NetherRealm to develop *Mortal Kombat X* this way? Wasn't it good enough before? “We always want *Mortal Kombat* to feel like *Mortal Kombat* and I think we've achieved that in how the game plays,” Goodman describes. “But at the same time, we're trying to innovate and we're trying to do something new – I think we'd feel anxious if we just sat on our laurels and didn't move into new territory. People would just get tired of the same characters and the same gameplay. New characters are a great way to keep things fresh, and we also took the Story Mode and fast-forwarded that a few years to bring this new generation of fighters in.”

Goodman covers a few things there – firstly, he mentions how NetherRealm has introduced new characters. Every *Mortal Kombat* has done that before, right? But this time it feels different – someone like Cassie Cage, daughter of Bruce Willis-inspired Jonny Cage, allows the team to take the core moveset of a familiar face and bash it around a little, giving more creative freedom to the dev team. Then, you've got the entirely new guys – D'Vorah, Kotal Kahn, Ferra/Torr – who all bring new movesets and abilities to *Mortal Kombat's* unique roster.

“From a fighting standpoint, [bringing in] fresh blood is really fun because it gives us a lot more flexibility to use new fighting styles and extend the movepool, and that's a very exciting thing,” Goodman reveals. “There are definitely some characters that we feel only some of the real hardcore fighters are really going to master because of that. One of Kung Lao's variations, for example, is a very very tricky fighter that uses his hat as a trap... similar with Raiden, where the ‘Lord Of Storms’ version can set up traps to mess with the opponent. It's not like casual players won't be able to use it or anything, but we just think only those guys with a *serious* level of skill can really make those variations go and use them to their maximum potential.”

The introduction of the Variations lets NetherRealm experiment, then, and mess around with a roster that's been cementing itself in gaming's culture for a while – imagine if NetherRealm had released *Mortal Kombat X* and said ‘Hey, Kung Lao can't throw his hat anymore, he can only use it as a trap.’ There'd be uproar, (proverbial) blood in the streets. Instead, the developer can say ‘hey, remember your favourite character? Well here he is, exactly the same! But we also gave him two whole new movesets.’ It's a canny strategy – everyone's a winner.

Oh, it gets better too – just because there's effectively three versions of each character, don't expect that to lessen the choices you have before jumping into a bout. “The main roster – including character variations – is going to be about the same size as past *Mortal Kombat* games,” Goodman laughs when we ask him if the studio has had to cut down on individual characters to make room for the Variations. “So three times that number starting number, really, is the *real* amount of characters we've got on offer [laughter].”

That's not a bad shout – especially when you consider other 2D fighters on the market tend to ship with a pretty paltry selection of starting characters these days. It helps that *Mortal Kombat*, like *SoulCalibur* and *Tekken* before it, is moving the complex narrative on a few years to tidy up the storyline and help ease some of the newer

fighters into the mix.

“From a creative standpoint, [moving things forward] helps, you can explore how these new fighters get to communicate with the ‘old guard’ – you know, the veterans – and what they represent.” He's not wrong – each character has a unique intro line when they step into battle with a specific fighter, and the new komatants are easily the best. Take, for example, Raiden's intro with Kotal Kahn. ‘You have no chance, Thunder God,’ the new Emperor of Outworld says. Raiden's reply seems stock, generic – ‘Lightning will blot out the sun’ – until Khan mutters to himself ‘... Temporarily.’ It seems small, but this interplay means so much when building the world and lore around a fighting game.

That leads us neatly onto the Story Mode – a staple part of the *Mortal Kombat* experience. NetherRealm's last project was the DC-licensed *Injustice: Gods Among Us*, a

“I think we'd feel anxious if we just sat on our laurels and didn't move into new territory. People would just get tired of the same characters and gameplay”

fighting game that put the cinematic experience first, making each fight feel like a scripted experience in between one long TV series. And *Mortal Kombat X* is no different.

“We found that the evolution of story mode from *Mortal Kombat* through to *Injustice* became more and more integrated; you feel like the whole story is seamless,” explains Goodman. “It's more interactive that way – the Story plays out as one long interactive building.”

It's also handy for bringing players that are perhaps uncomfortable with the more technical aspects of fighting games (combos, frame-data, juggling, parries) closer to the game – giving them a tutorial that's more than just a bunch of moves listed in boxes on the screen. “Part of the process of building this game was all about creating features that



## RAIDEN

ALIGNMENT: Good

SPECIALITY: Godly Thunder

**BEST FATALITY: Transplant** – Raiden rips out his opponent's brain and heart, lightning-fries them, and replaces them. The organs explode, leaving smoking craters in the body

The eternal God of Thunder, Raiden is the protector of Earthrealm and mentor to the heroes of good. In the original timeline (*Mortal Kombat 1-8*), Raiden is promoted to Elder God after defeating the sorcerer Shinnok, before the corruption of the world eventually turns him evil. Currently, though, Raiden is still as pure as they come – despite being a somewhat vengeful God...

## SUB-ZERO

ALIGNMENT: Good

SPECIALITY: Mastery of Ice

**BEST FATALITY: Spinal Smash** – Sub-Zero rips out his opponent's spine and skull, trailing it from their back. Then he freezes the rest of the body, swings the head into the torso via the spine and breaks the rest of the body

An assassin of the Lin Kuei clan, Sub-Zero wasn't born into the sect like his fellow assassins: rather, he and his brother Bi-Han were abducted by the Lin Kuei as children and taught the ways of assassination from an early age. Bi-Han was mysteriously killed, and Sub-Zero hunts for the murderer with every waking second...

## REPTILE

ALIGNMENT: Evil

SPECIALITY: Corrosive venom/invisibility

**BEST FATALITY: Acid Yak** – Reptile forces his opponent's mouth open, and spews acid into their stomach, leaving their flesh to dissolve

Reptile is known throughout the realms for his stealth and sneakiness, his incredible strength and unwavering loyalty. He is the last of the Saurian race and is utterly obsessed with restoring either his homeworld (which was annexed by Shao Khan and Outworld) or his people back to their former glory. This obsession has driven him to insanity.



The game will run on a modified version of the Unreal Engine 3 and hit 1080p and 60 frames per second on the Xbox One.

## SCORPION

ALIGNMENT: Neutral

SPECIALITY: Spear attacks/fire

**BEST FATALITY: Nether Gates** – Scorpion stabs his opponent's chest, then wraps his chain around their neck. He kicks them through a portal to NetherRealm, and they reappear through another, hanged and burnt

Scorpion is a hell-spawned spectre, a vessel of vengeance seeking reparations against Outworld and Shao Khan for the destruction of his clan and his family. He's a neutrally aligned character – purely because he isn't obsessed with destroying one realm or another, but rather with finding the means to resurrect his clan on Earthrealm. He has a rivalry with Lin Kuei sympathiser, Sub-Zero.



The MKX roster will apparently feature an exclusive character for each platform – we've got our fingers crossed for Master Chief on Xbox One.



“We’ve always tried to make the game as accessible as possible whilst delivering a deep and technical core fighting game”

From what we’ve seen of the returning Kano, the cyborg Aussie seems to have the most varied fighting styles in his variations.



### THE BIRTH OF THE REALMS

At the beginning of time, the Elder Gods waged war against the one ‘true’ god to ensure their own survival. To achieve this, the Elder Gods created special weapons – the Kamidogu. These weapons split the ‘true’ god into six pieces that would become the six realms: Earthrealm, Netherrealm, Outworld, Orderrealm, Chaosrealm and Edenia.



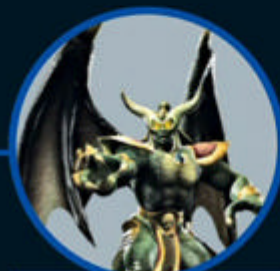
### THE FALL OF SHINNOK

The other Elder Gods watched over their individual assigned realms without quarrel, but Earth’s warden Shinnok had other plans. Tempted by greed and power, he attempted a hostile takeover, but was bested by a young god called Raiden. Shinnok was banished to Hell forever... or so it seemed. There was a sorcerer in Hell called Quan Chi that wanted to help Shinnok...



### THE PROPHECIES BEGIN

The Edenian God, Argus, married the mortal sorceress Delia. Powered by each other’s mysterious magic, Delia began to hallucinate prophecies of the end times – the annihilation of all the Realms, brought about by the power of the kombatanes of Mortal Kombat. To prevent this eventual doom, the couple created Blaze – a combatant powerful to kill any and all kombatanes...



### ONAGA THE DRAGON KING

The first emperor of Outworld, Onaga, managed to use his special dragon heart to resurrect the dead, creating an invincible army with which he annexed world after world into Outworld. It seemed Onaga would live forever, until Shao Khan (the dragon’s trusted advisor) tampered with Onaga’s plans for immortality, usurping the throne.



### SHAO KHAN’S REIGN OF TERROR

Shao Khan couldn’t command Outworld like his predecessor, under a united front. His tactic, therefore, was just to destroy everything in his path and add the burnt land to his empire instead. To tackle bigger quarry, the realm of Edenia, Shao Khan needed to win ten consecutive Mortal Kombat tournaments... and that happened despite Edenia’s best efforts.



◆ The arenas you can fight in remain 2D, but are interactive – in the forest, for example, you can jump off trees or snap off branches to fight with.



◆ It's nice to see Kung Lao hasn't lost any flexibility in his old age, maybe keeping a weighted hat on your head all your life keeps you fitter than expected?

◆ appeal to new gamers," Goodman tells us. "In the last few games, we've really taken steps to supply more single-player content – it's an easy road into the game, it's more forgiving, and you don't have to be incredibly skilled at fighting games to get a lot of enjoyment out of it. We've always tried to make the game as accessible as possible whilst still delivering a very deep and technical, core fighting game."

"*Injustice* was a great experiment for us in terms of learning how to serve our fans, and provide a ton of content and a ton of opportunities for our players to enjoy the game in a variety of different ways," Goodman explains. "One of the things we've become known for at NetherRealm is that all of our games deliver *tons* of content; and that's not just fighters – there's different modes, different challenges, tons of extra content you can unlock and find throughout the game... I think that's really become a trademark of our studio."

Goodman wasn't in a position to talk about *Mortal Kombat*'s newest feature when we spoke to him, but since then it's been revealed that part of the overall experience of NetherRealm's newest game is a concept called 'Faction Wars'. Each character belongs to one of five factions; the ninjitsu pro Lin Kuei, the monks of the White Lotus, the terrorist sect Black Dragon, the evil Brotherhood of Shadow, and the shady Special Forces.

Use your favourite character throughout the week, and you'll fulfil criteria that will play into a metagame that pulls in data from every player on earth to help your faction unlock special abilities, new gear and other perks. It's all part of that developmental philosophy NetherRealm has, to keep its games brimming with content. That isn't to say Goodman wants to alienate the core fighting crowd; in fact, *Mortal Kombat* has just been confirmed for a slot at the most prestigious professional fighting game tournament of them all; EVO.

"There is a level of validation [getting the EVO listing]," grins Goodman. "It shows we're creating a game that has an audience of professional gamers that really want to take on the challenge. And they really do it very well; we're always amazed at what the programmers are able to do with our game. We build it with the full intention of making it a technical fighting game, but we see players that discover things in the game that we hadn't even

“We're creating a game that has an audience of professional gamers that really want to take on the challenge”

thought of. As far as we can go with [the game], it's always amazing to see how much further the players take it.

"We're just [right now] dipping our toes into that professional gaming world, and it's been going very well. eSports is something that we're focusing on, and that we're going to put our eye towards in the near future. Fighting games are built for eSports, and I absolutely guarantee that our game is built for it in terms of technical depth."

So not only is NetherRealm making a fighter with a narrative mode aimed at getting the casual audience hooked (something that the recent timeline reset will help with, no doubt), but the studio is also making a game that can be enjoyed for days upon days of playtime by professional fighters, who will break down every Variation of every single character, seeing who's God-tier and whose spine *deserves* to be ripped from their necks.

*Mortal Kombat* may have entered this world in a flurry of blood and blades – rallying the mainstream against its cartoony depiction of violence – but its grown up a *lot* since then. The original game was made in under eight months, but the tenth instalment of the iconic franchise has been in development for around two years. And every second of that time shows when you see Raiden's battered head get lifted from his shoulders by a triumphant Reptile, when you pull off one of the most technical combos you've ever seen in a *Mortal Kombat* game, or when you and a few hundred thousand other players cheer together because your faction won the war that week. *Mortal Kombat* has grown up, in a sense, but that maturity has only made the game get bigger, bolder and bloodier. ☹



### MORTAL KOMBAT PROPER

With Edenia now part of Outworld, Shao Khan was declaring *Mortal Kombat* on every other realm, eventually setting his sights on Earthrealm. Raiden – now Earth's Elder God – summoned the best fighters of the White Lotus society to take on Outworld, but they failed, nine times in a row... before Liu Kang won at the last moment, saving earth and restoring Edenia.



### THE DEADLY ALLIANCE

Quan Chi broke away from NetherRealm alongside Shinnok, but rather than go help his master's doomed crusade against Edenia, the necromancer presented Shang Tsung with knowledge of Onaga's reanimated army. The two sorcerers joined forces; using magic they didn't really understand to create an army of the dead to help them take over *everything*.



### ONAGA RETURNS...

Thanks to the failed machinations of Shao Khan years ago, and manipulating a young Earthrealm warrior called Shujinko, Onaga hatched from an egg he had transferred his soul into. Onaga resurrected Earthrealm warriors to his own ends, made Raiden evil, but *still* failed in his quest for domination, falling to Earthrealm's few remaining warriors and getting banished to Hell.



### THE END TIMES

As Onaga was going about his conquering business, he managed to wake Blaze from his slumber, instigating the events of Armageddon. The kombatants from every realm flocked to Edenia to destroy this new threat, but instead of the prophesised victor – one of the sons of Argus – it ended up being none other than the usurped and now resurrected (obviously), Shao Khan.



### BACK TO THE FUTURE

There were only two survivors, from everywhere in the world, after the battle of Armageddon: Shao Khan and Raiden. Using the last of his strength, Raiden sends a message back to his past self, stating: 'He must win!' Of course, past Raiden has no clue what this Raiden is on about and as such begins to mess around with the original chronology, setting wholly different events in motion.

# THE INDIE REVOLUTION



# THE INDIE REVOL UTION

Words Stephen Ashby

## HOW INDIES AND THE ID@XBOX PROGRAM ARE CHANGING THE GAMES INDUSTRY FOR THE BETTER

**R**evolution is in the air. After a shoddy showing from last year's triple-A titles, the indies are fighting back. We've had enough of crappy, bug-filled games, of brown backgrounds and endless shooters. We want something new. Something fresh. And thanks to Microsoft's ID@Xbox program, we're getting it. However you look at it, independent developers are a huge part of Microsoft's plan for the Xbox One. After ID@Xbox took a front seat at last year's E3 conference, games have been making their way to the system in a steady stream, with plenty more already planned for release in the next 12 months.

"We had a huge variety of games [at E3]," says head of the ID@Xbox program Chris Charla to **X-ONE**, "and for me running the program, it's awesome to see the

player reaction. In our program there are a lot of emails, a lot of forms and meetings, and then you go to E3 and we saw six or seven rows of ID@Xbox stations, super-cool independent games all in one place. I was really pleased with player reaction, really pleased with press reaction, and then obviously the developers were really happy about that too."

This is perhaps the first time that indie games have had such a strong appearance at a major games show. In previous years it was a common sight for the booths of small developers to be near-empty, while hundreds queued for the next big *Halo* or *Call Of Duty* title. But the industry is changing, and Microsoft is leading the charge. Indies are stepping into the spotlight, and they're absolutely owning it.



# THE INDIE REVOLUTION

But is this having an effect on how big game developers are making games? As indie titles become more popular, many are suggesting that a war is brewing between smaller developers making cool games and huge companies spending millions on the next big release. Charla doesn't agree with this, though – he sees the situation as much more positive.

"I think everyone in the game industry, whether they're working at, say, Turtle Rock on *Evolve* or the guys at Asteroid Base working on *Lovers In A Dangerous Spacetime*, we're all constantly trying to learn from each other," he explains. "I think there's sometimes a tendency to want to say 'Oh, there's the indies and the triple-A guys, and they're enemies!' Well, first of all, they're not 'enemies', because they've all previously worked together. Lots of triple-A developers worked at independent studios and vice versa, and it's just *games*. It's all about scale, and everyone's always learning from each other."

Can you feel the love? We can. It perhaps speaks of the passion behind the games industry when you hear about the mutual respect between developers, though. We look at games going head-to-head, companies releasing titles to compete with each other, but at a developer level the teams are really just trying to make great games. And learning from each other, getting inspiration from other games, is just part of the job.

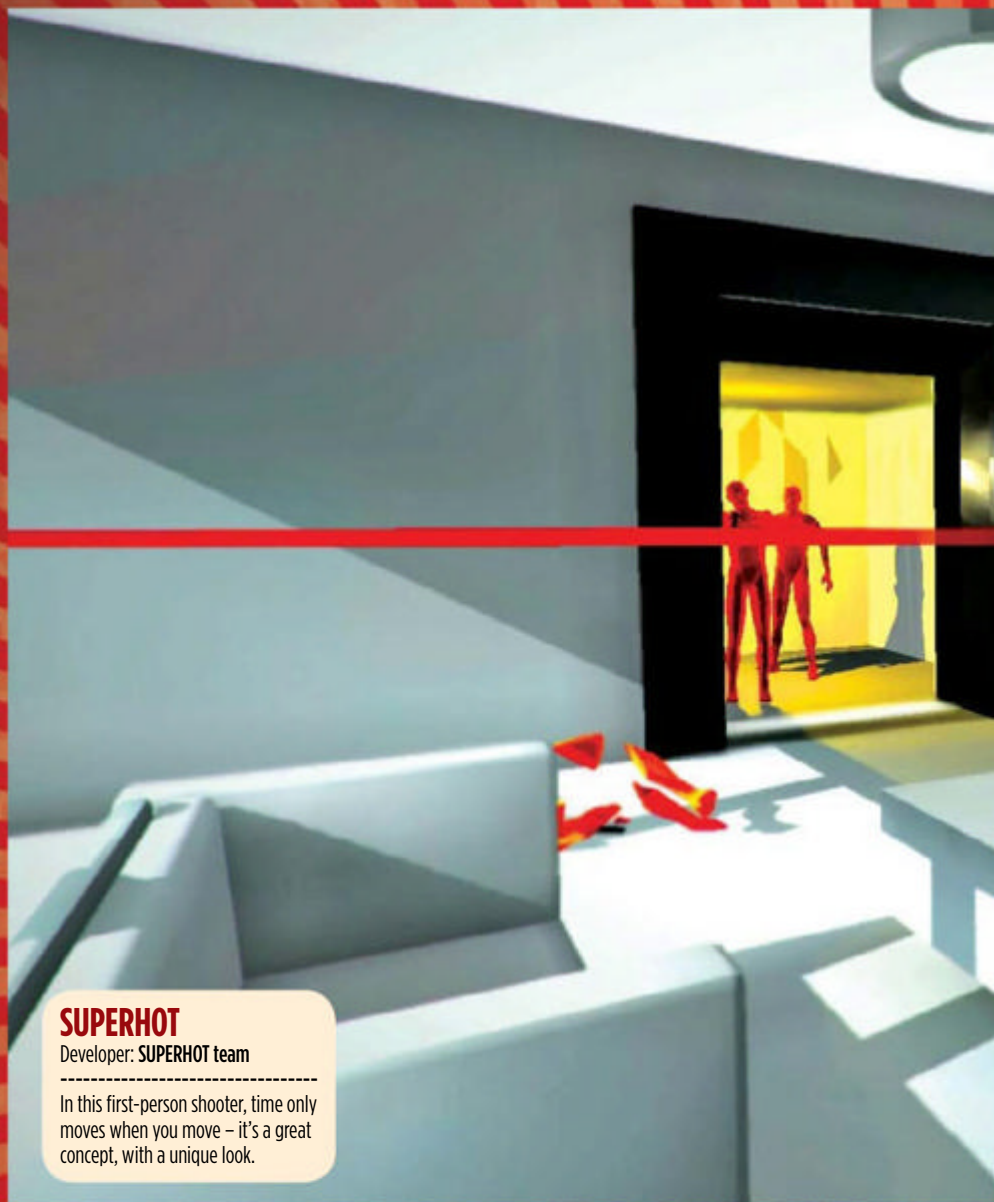
And the hard work is really paying off. Titles like *Guacamelee!*, *#IDARB* and *Limbo* all feel unique, and

**“Lots of triple-A developers worked at independent studios and vice versa... It's all about scale”**

simply ooze quality. But there are plenty more games due in the next few months, and they are looking great. For some studios, the games that are in the pipeline are the first games they've made for a major console. For others, the games may act as an interactive CV to help them collaborate with others in the future. But one thing that links them all together is the fact that, for the small teams that made them, the titles are a labour of love.

Perhaps the most astonishing thing about the titles that are in the pipeline, though, is the sheer variety of content that is coming out soon. If you're looking for a break from your yearly dose of *Assassin's Creed* or *FIFA*, there are now plenty of games that can offer you a breath of fresh air. Even Charla is surprised by how much creative variety there is the ID@Xbox program so far. "My job before ID@Xbox was portfolio director for Xbox Live Arcade at Microsoft Studios, and [my role] was really to help pick the portfolio," he says. "It was about having good variety, a good mix of content. I was looking at our tracker that tracks what games are coming for the next six months at ID@Xbox, and I probably couldn't have done a better job if I was trying to curate it myself."

But this isn't Microsoft pushing for new and creative ideas – it's all down to the teams behind the games. "On ID@Xbox developers tell us what they want to bring to the system," explains Charla. "We're not going out and telling them what to do and what not to do. It's a testament to the variety of independent developers that the content that's coming to Xbox One through ID@Xbox over the next few months is super diverse. I guess that makes me feel a little bit bad about the job



## SUPERHOT

Developer: SUPERHOT team

In this first-person shooter, time only moves when you move – it's a great concept, with a unique look.



## MASSIVE CHALICE

Developer: Double Fine Productions

Good isometric, turn-based strategy games are hard to find; this could be a winner with its bright art style.



## X-ONE TOP 5 ID@XBOX GAMES

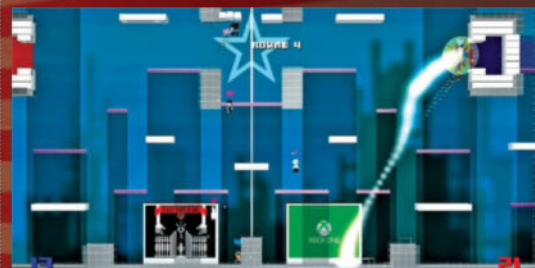
### LIMBO

This multi-award-winning game tells the sombre story of a young boy searching for his missing sister. The moody art style and stunning music helped propel *Limbo* into the public eye.



### #IDARB

This fast-paced multiplayer game has taken over **X-ONE** Towers. The eight-player mode is brilliant fun, with high-speed action and skill shots making this fun to play, but tough to master.



### THE ESCAPISTS

We never thought a prison escape game would make our top five, but we just can't stop playing this at the moment. The retro art style and clever game mechanics keep us coming back for more.



### GUACAMELEE!

Bright, colourful and Mexican are all words we would use to describe *Guacamelee!*. Also: fun, bonkers and punchy. It's not the longest game, but we think you'll enjoy every second of it.

### THREES!

It's weird to think that a port of an iOS game could make our top five, but damn it we keep bloody playing *Threes!*. There's not much beyond beating your high scores, but it's still freakishly addictive.



### NERO

Developer: Storm In A Teacup

This 'visual storybook' mostly revolves around you solving puzzles in a mystical world.

# THE INDIE REVOLUTION



## BLUES AND BULLETS

EPISODIC NOIR THRILLER

DEVELOPER: A Crowd of Monsters

This noir-style detective story sees you exploring the dark streets of a dangerous city to track down a dangerous murderer. "We have the feeling that a game that is something like playing in a TV drama will fit really well on a platform like Xbox One," says *Blues And Bullets'* producer, Ramon Nafria. "I think it is a perfect match."



## SPEEDRUNNERS

MULTIPLAYER SIDE-SCROLLING MAYHEM

DEVELOPER: tinyBuild

"SpeedRunners actually got its first big break on Xbox 360," explains Mike Rose, talent scout at publisher and developer tinyBuild. "It was the incredible reaction from Xbox fans that made the studio realize that something much bigger really needed to be done with this concept."

The game focuses on multiplayer, with players racing around a platforming 'track'. If you fall behind, you're eliminated; eliminate all the other players and you win a point. "The feel of *SpeedRunners'* local multiplayer is just unrivalled," says Rose. "Being able to physically turn to your friend and laugh in their face as you tear off into the distance is glorious."



## CHROMA SQUAD

Developer: Behold Studios

Take control of a TV station, hiring actors and managing budgets... until the TV shows become reality.

## BELOW

Developer: Capybara Games

A tough, top-down adventure in a beautifully animated, randomly-generated world



## GOAT SIMULATOR

Developer: Coffee Stain Studios

You take control of a goat in an open world – and it's exactly as bonkers as it sounds. There are lots of explosions.

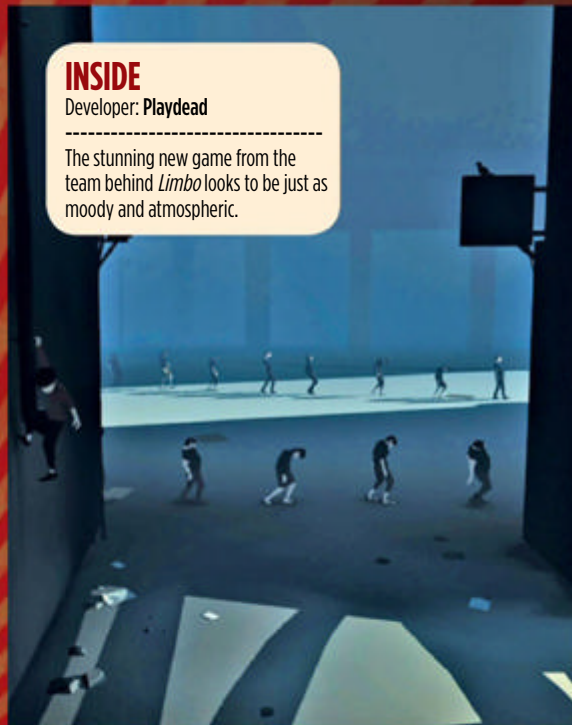




### INSIDE

Developer: **Playdead**

The stunning new game from the team behind *Limbo* looks to be just as moody and atmospheric.



### LOVERS IN A DANGEROUS SPACETIME

TWO-PLAYER LOCAL TEAM-A-THON

DEVELOPER: Asteroid Base

For co-founder of Asteroid Base and lead programmer on *Lovers*, Adam Winkels, the ID@Xbox program has been a breath of fresh air. "Since we first reached out to [Chris Charla and his team], they have been very enthusiastic about bringing *Lovers* to the Xbox One," he says. "They've been great with promotion, too, having featured the game at their booths at events like E3, TGS, PAX and many others."

While there is, of course, pressure to perform, Winkels feels positive about the game's future. "With a combination of word of mouth and positive press coverage we hope to be able to reach a large number of Xbox One players," he says. "If that doesn't work, we could just rename the game *Call Of Duty* or *Assassin's Creed* to make sure the game appears next to those franchises when people are browsing the store."



▶ I used to do [laughs] but it makes me feel really good about what's coming through ID@Xbox."

But what is it that is allowing the developers to create such diverse and varied content? Primarily, it seems to be the fact that they aren't being told what to do by overbearing publishers. "In previous generations the only way for us to get on to the Xbox would have been to sign with a publisher, which would have made us beholden to their timelines and feedback," says Adam Winkels, co-founder of Asteroid Base and lead programmer of *Lovers In A Dangerous Spacetime*. "By self publishing we are able to truly make the game we want to make."

It's clear that creative ideas are a key to making indie games – if you want your game to sell, there's no point making another first person shooter or standard platformer. You have to come up with a hook, something that will grab the player in just a few minutes. Whether it's a unique art style, a pioneering gameplay element or just an addictive twist, exploring that niche has produced some of the most brilliant diverse games in recent memory.

But a game is nothing without backing. With a big publisher on your side, your game is likely to get much more exposure, advertising and attention from media outlets. It's something that indies have always struggled with – on a tight budget, paying for a TV ad or hiring a PR agency just isn't an option. But that's where Microsoft comes in. The ID@Xbox program is a strong focus for the company, and that's clearer than ever when you go looking for new games on your console. "On Xbox, a game is a game is a game. We've had really good placement on the Marketplace so far for ID@Xbox games and I don't think that's going to change. Our Marketplace team obviously are going to support big,

**“By self-publishing, we are able to truly make the game that we want to make”**

anticipated titles, but they also want to make sure that players see a huge diverse selection of stuff, which is one of the main reasons we started the program."

And the developers seem to agree. Mike Rose from tinyBuild – the team behind *SpeedRunners* – has seen things change a lot in a short time: "We're finally seeing the level playing field that indies have always dreamed of," he says. "Just a couple of years ago you'd see console gamers saying on forums, 'Ewww, no more indie games, they suck!' But that sentiment is disappearing rapidly – at least from our perspective – and more people are finally getting to grips with smaller, cheaper titles, and realising that they can easily hold their own against the triple-As."

But holding their own is the underselling what they can do. Indie games are finally taking centre stage, with Microsoft directing the production and an eager audience of gamers finishing off this strange metaphor. It's a great time for indies, and – contrary to some opinions – we think it's a great time for games as well. And while he might be paid to say it, Charla agrees.

"We're in a new generation for the first time in ten years or so," he says, "and I suspect we'll look back on the best games of the generation we're in today, and some of the games we pick will be ID@Xbox games." Viva la Revolución! ❧



### CUPHEAD

Developer: **Studio MDHR**

A run-and-gun title that looks like an old cartoon, but features branching storylines and a focus on boss battles.



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XBOX ONE



## GAME DETAILS

PUBLISHER  
**2K Games**

DEVELOPER  
**Turtle Rock Studios**

GAME TYPE  
**David's versus Goliath**

PLAYERS  
**1-5**

DLC  
**Yes - more monsters, maps and hunters**

ACHIEVEMENT DIFFICULTY  
**Moderate**

NEED TO UNLOCK  
**Collect Them All! (30G)**

## IN BRIEF

Left 4 Dead creators Turtle Rock Studio pit four player-controlled Hunters against a deadly player-controlled monster as it grows in power through three evolution cycles

# EVOLVE



www.evolvegame.com



/evolvegame



@evolvegame

## Lost in the woods



It's a wonder that *Evolve* ever made it past the conceptual stages of development and into full production. Hunt - *Evolve*'s primary game mode - is essentially, fundamentally broken. The concept itself is remarkably simple to wrap your

head around: you have the opportunity to team up with three other players on a monster hunt, or the option to control the beast itself and cause chaos on the fictional planet of Shear. Hunt represents the promise of *Evolve*, whilst simultaneously demonstrating how a handful of befuddling design decisions fail to capitalise on its potential.

In a perfect world, the chase should be better than the catch. *Evolve*, by its very nature, was destined to be exciting and unpredictable. But the truth is, the rhythm of its signature Hunt mode is forever the same, and largely unsatisfying. You'll struggle to break this rhythm, regardless of whether you're embodying one of the 12 Hunters or 3 monsters on offer in the base game experience.

As a Hunter, it's all about teamwork. Each of the four classes are required to buff and complement one another to appropriately track, locate and slay the monster. Assault players are the frontline damage dealers; Trackers find and lock down the target; Medics are responsible for keeping players alive; and Support deal out massive AOE damage while offering short-burst protection to team mates. That's the idea, anyway. It becomes abundantly clear, very early on, that no matter how well you work together as a unit, more often than

**"It's pitching four iterations of David against a Goliath raised by Godzilla"**

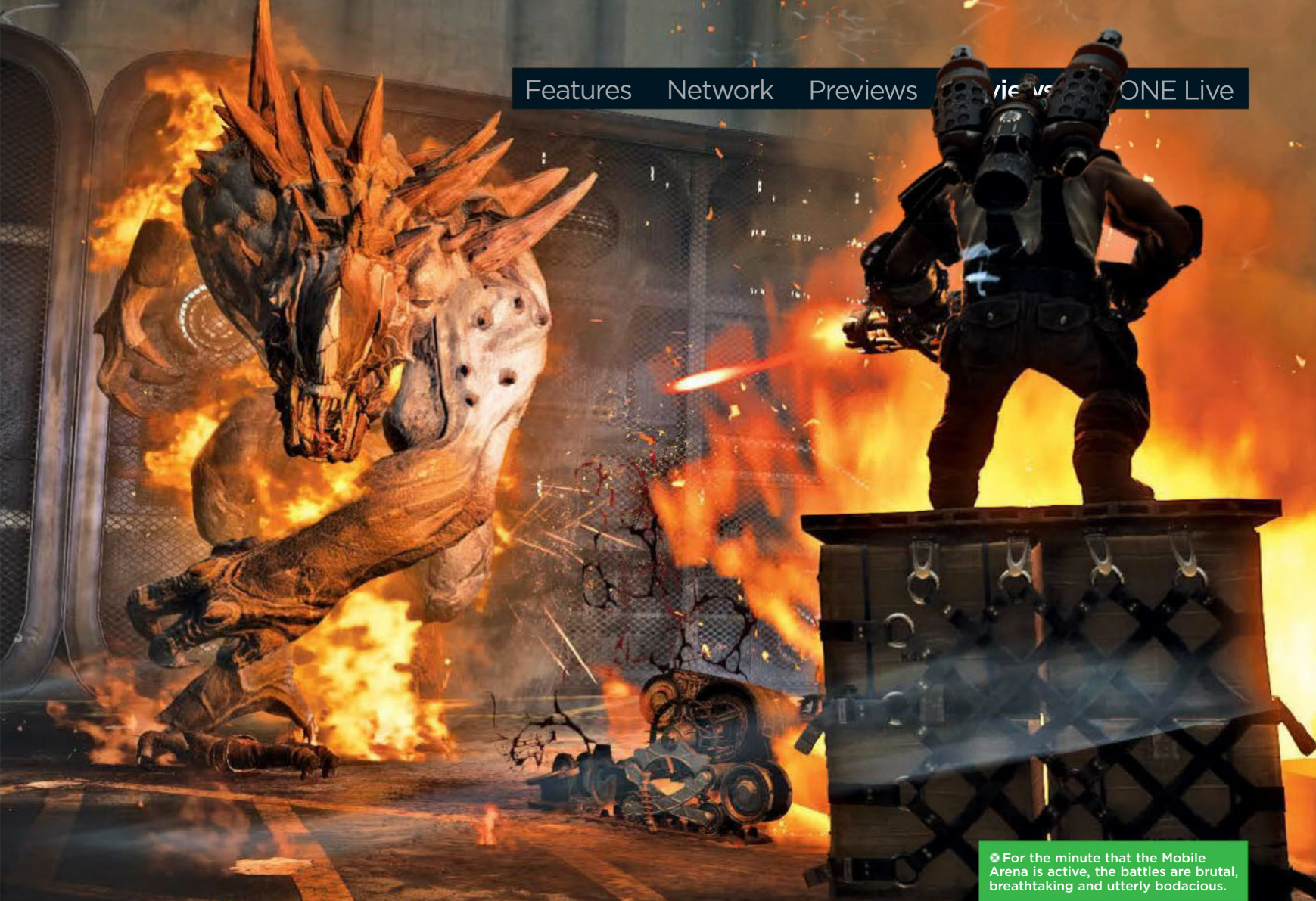
not, you're going to find yourself lost in the woods with nothing to do for uncomfortably long periods of time.

Ah, and then there's the monster. Despite their size and obvious tenacity, the first few minutes of every game as one of the monsters will be spent escaping and evading the pursuing Hunters in order to progress from the puny stage one evolution. Feeding on wildlife around the map will eventually allow you to evolve and grow more powerful, letting you dump skill points into a variety of game altering abilities. Until you reach Stage 3 - the game balance-destroying final state that lets the monster decimate the enemy players or rip apart a power relay for victory - all of your energy will be spent avoiding combat with the Hunters. They'll be bored traipsing through environments, and you'll be desperate to evolve as quickly as possible to get to the good stuff.

This is where one of *Evolve*'s primary problems exists. While they might occasionally receive environmental hints towards the monster's location, as the Hunters you'll still always feel like you are one step behind, circling the drain of entertainment. You might occasionally stop to shoot wildlife concealing a

Should you be playing alone or if a player disconnects, there is AI to play with. It's competent, but really predictable.





✖ For the minute that the Mobile Arena is active, the battles are brutal, breathtaking and utterly bodacious.

group buff, or to let your short-use jetpack recharge, but then you'll be back to the hunt. Back to walking in circles for five to ten minutes around a beautifully-rendered, and well-concealed, prison. It can become an immensely mundane exercise in monster hunting.

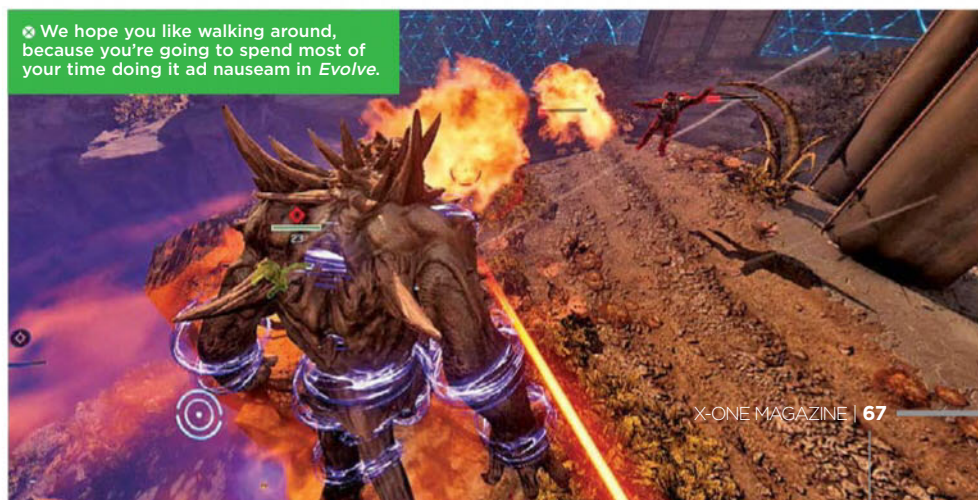
When you do eventually stumble onto the beast in all of its terrifying glory, *Evolve* suddenly and unexpectedly springs to life. The Hunters will have next to no time to contain the beast, the Assault and Support classes will need to move in to distract the monster while the Trapper locks down the Mobile Arena – a shimmering barrier that encases a small area inside an impenetrable bubble shield.

Start the clock. As the Mobile Arena traps you within shooting distance of the monster, *Evolve* becomes a frantic big boss battle: sixty seconds to kill or be killed, and it's often breathtaking. From here, the Hunters will need to work together to whittle away the monster's health bar. The appeal should be immediately apparent for the player controlling the monster. The action is quick and heart-pounding, especially when you're eventually given the opportunity to hulk out, to go a little crazy and inflict maximum damage in a minimal amount of time. Whatever role you play in this battle, you feel immediately powerful and dominant in a way other multiplayer games rarely manage to replicate. Stop the clock.

#### GAMING EXPERIENCE



✖ We hope you like walking around, because you're going to spend most of your time doing it ad nauseam in *Evolve*.



## EXTENDED EXPERIENCE



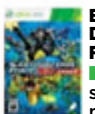
### LEFT 4 DEAD

You and three friends team up to battle through the zombie apocalypse. It's awesome fun, and time hasn't touched its excellence at all. Grab it if you can.



### LEFT 4 DEAD 2

Valve took the lead on development with the sequel, and while it's not quite as good, it's still pretty damn fun!



### EARTH DEFENSE FORCE 2025

Want to smash giant monsters? *Earth Defense Force 2025* is a janky game that lets you have serious fun revelling in proper destruction.



## TRENDING

### #DLCPLANS

The dust has just about settled on 2K's controversial DLC plans, but this will be brought up every time a new pack is announced.

## SEQUENCE

### Evolve's 'campaign' explained

Evacuation is Turtle Rock's attempt to drop a campaign, offering some variety from the standard Hunt mode



### PICKING SIDES

You're either locking yourself into the role of Hunters or monster here, so choose wisely. You're about to play six back-to-back rounds.



### NEXT ROUND, FIGHT

The victor of each round will be granted game-altering buffs, like the release of a toxin that stops the monster from using its smell ability.



### LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

Between rounds, all five players will have the opportunity to vote on which of the 16 maps and game modes will be played next.



### DEFEND THE REFINERY, OR SOMETHING

By the end, the Hunters will be defending a refuelling station and the monster will be trying to destroy it with an army of minions.

"It can become an immensely mundane exercise in monster hunting"

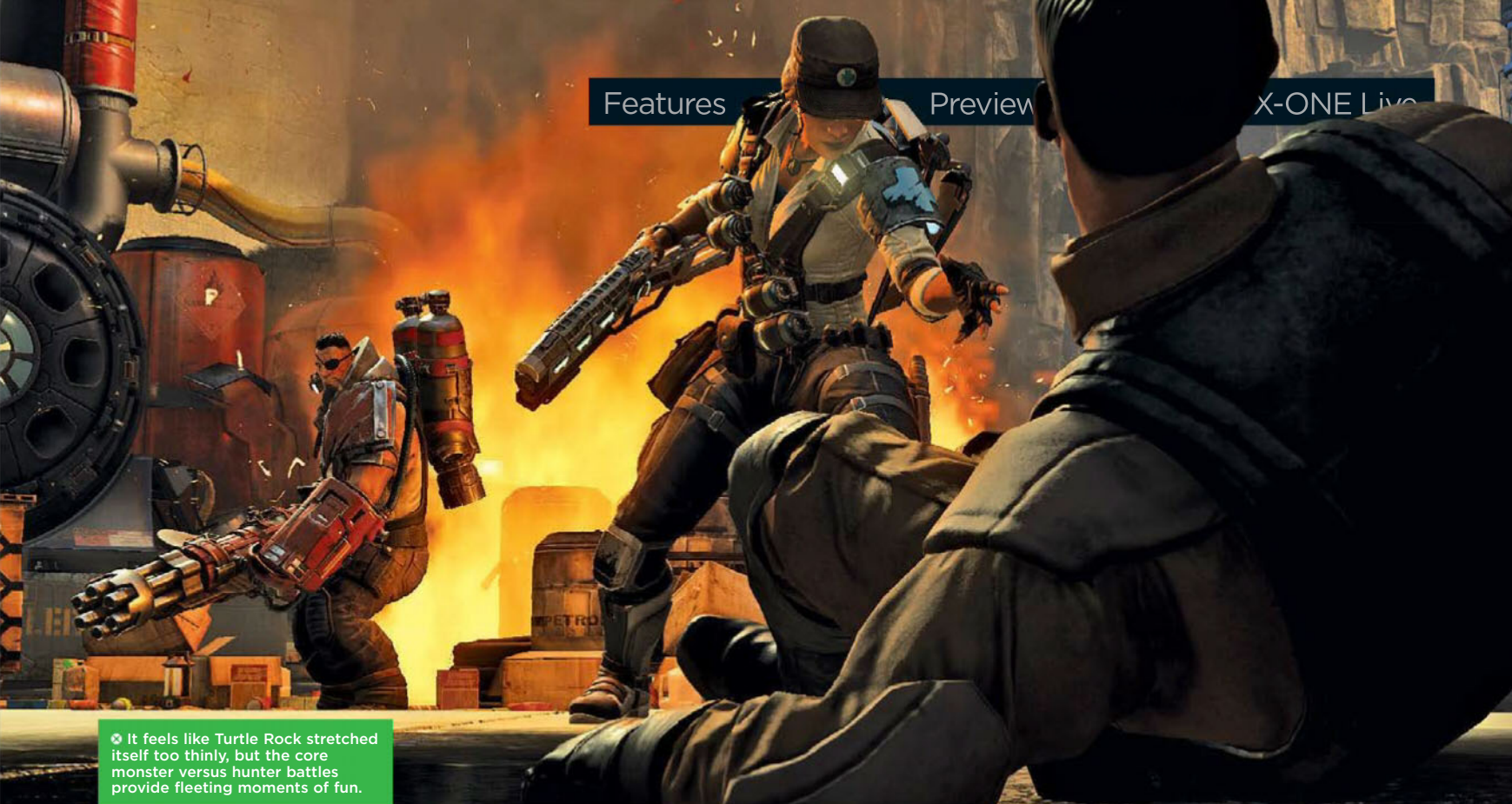
Once those sixty seconds pass, the smoke settles and the mobile arena will release its hold on the serious good times. If both teams are still standing, the battle either drags on until its eventual conclusion or one side will look to escape; to recuperate and heal up. Then the mundane dance of attention span devastation begins all over again. This is *Evolve's* inescapable rhythm. It isn't uncommon for it to take between five and fifteen minutes before both groups even meet. The relentless walk around planet Shear's lovely scenery isn't fun for either parties, yet – for some inexplicable reason – it makes up the majority of the game experience.

That said, there's always a chance that the game will be over in a time shorter than *Evolve's* lengthy load screens. Some rounds can see the Hunters stumble onto the monster on a whim within seconds – before it has even had a chance to evolve. If that happens, it's basically game over, man. You can try to run, to hide, but you'll have an indecently difficult time trying to evolve in this state. The game modes and map design don't allow for a happy medium between a round being dragged out until you're bored senseless, or it being over before it begins. That's a problem that can't be addressed in patches, though it could be in future DLC. This issue stems largely from the lack of objectives for either side in Hunt. The game does offer a handful of subtle variations on the mode – tasking the monster with defending eggs in Nest or the Hunters with extracting survivors in Rescue – but they not only fail to solve the larger problems with *Evolve's* core design, but fail to captivate in a way that the concept promises.

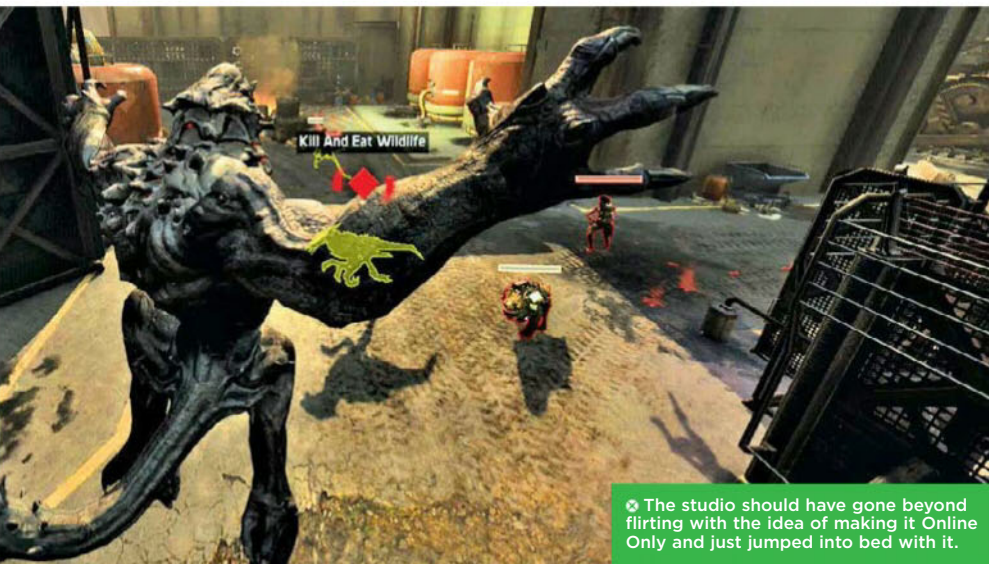
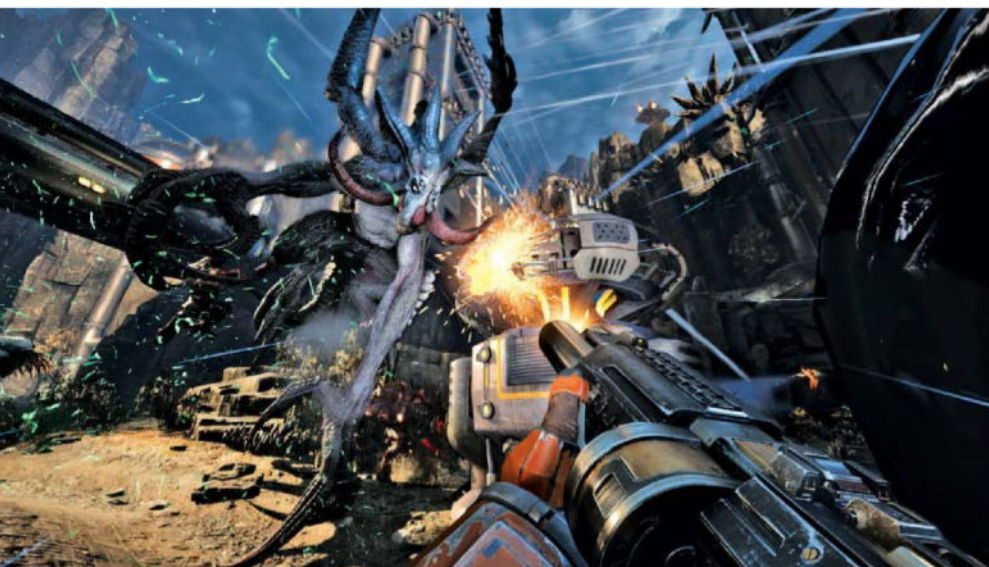
If you ignore the black hole of hype that has come to swallow *Evolve* over the last 12 months, it's simply a game about four players fighting a monster. It's a game built around the thrill of a great end-game boss battle. It's pitching four iterations of David against a Goliath raised by Godzilla. Why *Evolve* seeks to keep this slice of gameplay heaven so mischievously out of reach for so much of the time you spend on planet Shear is a mystery.

There is fun to be had in small doses, then, but even the core combat feels hollow. The spectacle is there, but the battles lack impact. Mechanically, the gameplay is a marked improvement over *Left 4 Dead* – but is that really the metric we should be judging *Evolve* by? In reality, the shooting falls just above *PayDay 2* in handling, but way behind the likes of *Call Of Duty: Advanced Warfare*, *Destiny* and *Titanfall* when it comes to





✖ It feels like Turtle Rock stretched itself too thinly, but the core monster versus hunter battles provide fleeting moments of fun.



✖ The studio should have gone beyond flirting with the idea of making it Online Only and just jumped into bed with it.

responsiveness, punch and feedback. The monsters, while easy enough to control, encounter similar issues as the Hunters. The Goliath often feels floaty and imprecise to control, not to mention ineffectual below its final evolution state. The Kraken and Wraith suffer from similar response issues – sometimes it's difficult to know if you're even hitting anything, not that it matters, both are so wildly over-powered that there's little reason to ever run or hide.

*Evolve* might – on the surface, at least – offer a variety of ways for each class to combat the monster, but the way it comes together *every time* is seemingly identical. It rarely surprises, and once the initial excitement of seeing and defeating the monster subsides, it clearly lacks the depth of design, gameplay hooks and gimmicks to keep you interested. Try as hard as Turtle Rock has, *Evolve* fails to offer the longevity and accessibility that the ever-popular *Left 4 Dead* seemed to achieve so effortlessly.

The monsters and hunters will no doubt be balanced in the coming weeks via patches. But that can't fix the larger problems that plague Turtle Rock's Xbox One debut title. Don't come into *Evolve* expecting a straight up monster shooter. Instead, come in expecting to spend a lot of time grinding through Hunt mode – and a handful of variations of it – to unlock the full array of Hunters, monsters and abilities. Expect to spend a *hell* of a long time orienteering a digital space. But don't expect *Evolve* to change the face of multiplayer gaming in the next-generation, the basic structure simply isn't strong enough to support it.

Play in the perfect environment – five players in the same room, with five consoles LANed together with red-hot banter flying every step of the way – and *Evolve* escapes a degree of its mystifying mediocrity. But with the fun only materialising in the fleeting moments of all-out action, *Evolve* fails to feel like anything more than a proof of concept, with hints of what could have been were the appropriate game modes, systems and objectives put into place for a full enjoyable game experience.

✖ JOSH WEST

## VERDICT

Brief excellence, but the entire experience is rarely exciting. Actual battles are manic in the best possible way, but it's a shame that the rest of the game is dull.

5

XBOX ONE



GAME  
DETAILS

PUBLISHER  
Capcom

DEVELOPER  
In-house

GAME TYPE  
Action-heavy  
horror

PLAYERS  
1-2

DLC  
Yes - Episodes  
2 through 4

ACHIEVEMENT  
DIFFICULTY  
Medium

NEED TO  
UNLOCK  
Three Women  
And A Barry  
(20G)

## IN BRIEF

Claire Redfield and Barry Burton set out to make *Resident Evil* relevant again as they head off to an isolated and mysterious island for some zombie hunting, scares and serious co-operative good times.

# RESIDENT EVIL REVELATIONS 2 EPISODE ONE: PENAL COLONY

www.capcom.co.jp/biohd /ResidentEvil @RE\_Games

## Returning a corpse to the land of the living



*Resident Evil* is finally shambling out of the mediocrity that has plagued the franchise for the better part of a decade. *Revelations 2* is remarkably caught between Capcom's current-generation intentions and surprisingly beholden

to last-generation's various successes and failures. That makes *Episode One: Penal Colony*, something of a quandary. *Revelations 2* clearly isn't going to be the stand-in for *Resident Evil 7* that we were pining after but *Episode One* does a fantastic job of celebrating the series' legacy of dangerous encounters, silly stories and the occasional jump scare.

Much in the same vein as 2013's *Revelations*, the sequel pits fan-favourite characters together in an all-new environment and stands back to watch the B-movie grade chaos ensue. Over the course of *Episode One*'s two-hour adventure you'll be introduced to two pairs of playable characters, each headed-up by a legacy operative still haunted by their past interactions with the Spencer Mansion and Raccoon City.

Claire Redfield - along with Barry Burton's daughter, Moira - are kidnapped from a TerraSave benefit faster than you can shout "Umbrella did it!" and awaken inside an immensely creepy prison, shackled to bracelets that detect its wearer's fear levels, for nefarious means, no doubt. Both characters lack any real memory of how they ended up locked inside the world's worst penal colony, but that's okay, because *Episode One* sets up the world's most forgettable story anyway.

But you shouldn't be here for the story; you should be here for the thrills, which *Revelations 2* has no problem dishing out along a carefully-paced series of dank corridors and dreary operating rooms. Claire and Moira operate as a unit, which means you'd better be prepared for local co-op or a forced AI partnership. Thankfully, the system works better than in *RE5*, with the AI showing general competence throughout.

It's an interesting take on a traditional co-op experience that undoubtedly springs to life for local players. While Claire acts as the powerhouse of the unit - packing a pistol and knife combo - Moira prefers to wield a rather ineffectual crowbar and flashlight weapon set. This forces both players to work in tandem, with Moira acting as support to Claire by blinding enemies and stunning them before the killing blow can be

inflicted. It works surprisingly well; both characters invite you to consider an entirely different playstyle and approach to the same situation, while avoiding the pitfall of letting one character feeling overlooked or worthless. It's a solid dynamic that pumps some fresh life into an otherwise totally familiar game.

The other pairing then, is the always-awesome Barry Burton on the hunt for his daughter, and a mysterious little girl named Natalia. Ex-S.T.A.R.S. Burton packs serious firepower, while Natalia can barely throw a brick. She can, however, sense the

living dead through the walls, because... well, because this is Capcom. The second portion of *Episode One* changes the dynamic of *Revelations 2* considerably, and it's a great palette cleanser. The player controlling Natalia is tasked with sneaking about and highlighting enemies so that Barry can do what he does best: killing zombies and making stupid jokes.

Truth be told, *Revelations 2* has been very smartly designed. While Claire and Moira are the more capable pair, they face deadlier enemies. You'll often be swarmed by multiple threats, forcing Claire to

unload what little ammo she has remaining to escape certain death from the Afflicted. Barry, on the other hand, has a little girl to protect and more commonly finds himself dispatching lone enemies through stealth or - when the occasion calls for it - a magnum so large it would make Revolver Ocelot weak at the knees. The co-op dynamic, whether you're pairing up with a friend or the AI, works surprisingly well. This is backed up by a well-refined control system, adapted from the original *Revelations*. The 'action' style of play basically ensures you have access to full movement control as well as evasive manoeuvres that actually functions as a mechanic to dodge danger.

The only place *Revelations 2* really stumbles is with its tone. It's full of stupid dialogue that harkens back to famous quotables, and there's the occasional slice of dark humour, but the ludicrous boss monsters *Resident Evil* is famous for are thus far absent, as are crazy environments and long-winded - but ultimately satisfying - puzzles to solve. If *The Evil Within* proved anything, it's that these elements can still exist within a modern game without just being nostalgia hooks. But *Revelations 2* is still off to a pretty good start. We aren't convinced the episodic model was necessary, and the story isn't anything special, but the core gameplay mechanics and interesting co-op dynamic make this one of *Resident Evil*'s finest forays into the action-horror genre in a long time.

JOSH WEST

"Barry commonly finds himself dispatching enemies with a magnum so large it would make Revolver Ocelot weak at the knees"

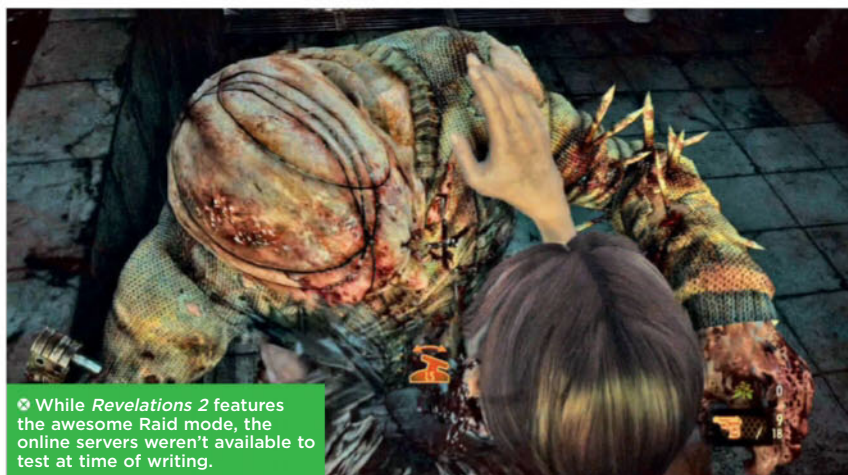
## GAMING EXPERIENCE



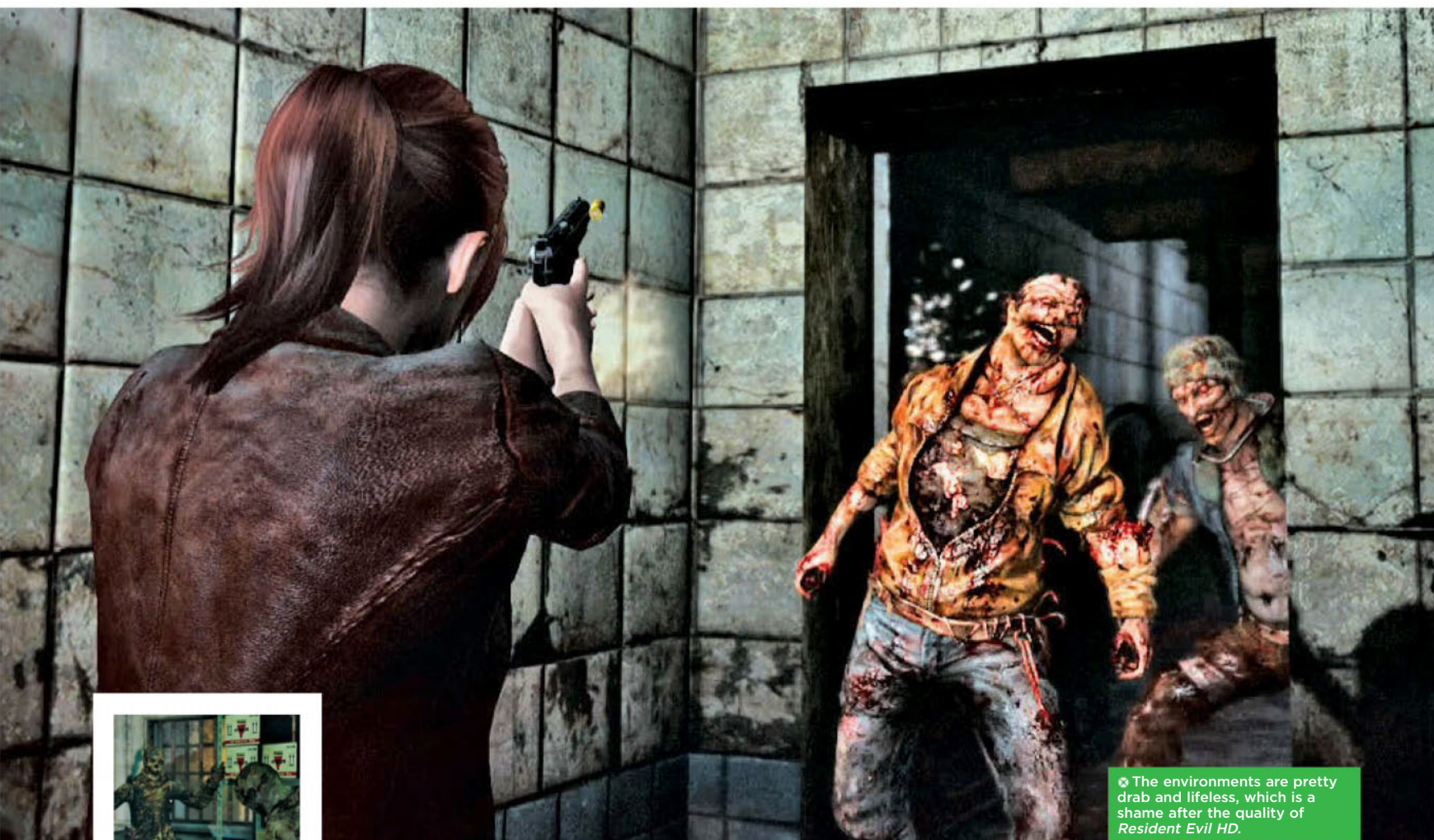
## VERDICT

It's easy enough to ignore *Resident Evil* these days, but *Revelations 2* proves there's still some life in the old series yet. Grab a friend and get involved.

7



✦ While *Revelations 2* features the awesome Raid mode, the online servers weren't available to test at time of writing.



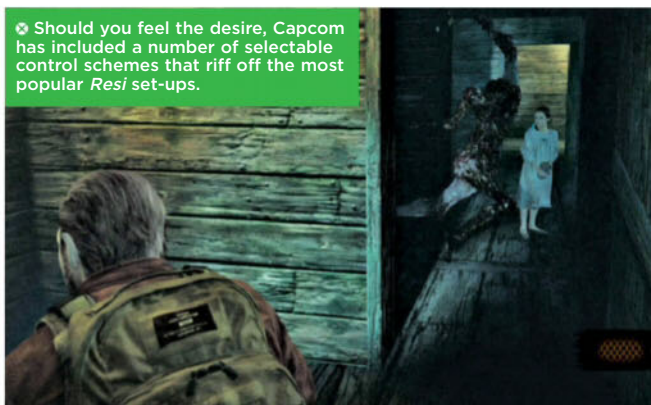
✦ The environments are pretty drab and lifeless, which is a shame after the quality of *Resident Evil HD*.



✦ Should you feel the desire, Capcom has included a number of selectable control schemes that riff off the most popular *Resi* set-ups.

## TRENDING #RETURN TOFORM

■ Despite the strange use of an episodic structure, this is a welcomed return to form for *Resident Evil*.



✦ Claire and Moira are the deadliest pairing, obviously, which means they subsequently go up against far tougher enemies.

XBOX ONE

XBOX ONE



## GAME DETAILS

PUBLISHER  
**Tecmo Koei**

DEVELOPER  
**Omega Force**

GAME TYPE  
**Strategic  
hack-n-slash**

PLAYERS  
**1-2**

DLC  
**TBC**

ACHIEVEMENT  
DIFFICULTY  
**Moderate**

NEED TO  
UNLOCK  
**Many Ways To  
Live - 70G**

## IN BRIEF

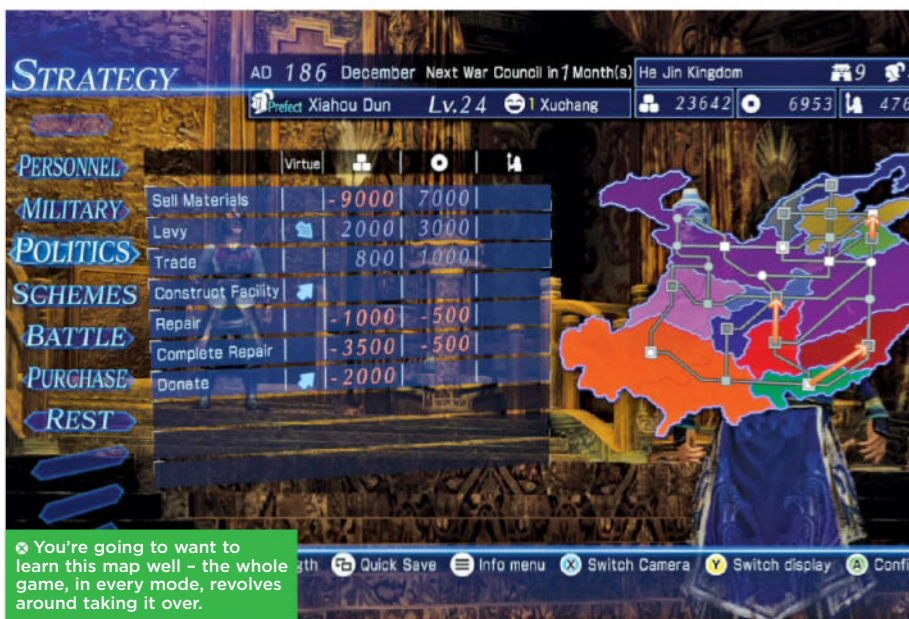
You're put in the shoes of an upstart strategic commander, tasked with annexing various duchies within China to meet your own diabolical ends...



In battle, you can use pre-equipped tactics to get the upper hand on your enemies.



By 'raiding' territories before you take over them, you can weaken the troops in the field and make it easier to dominate the land.

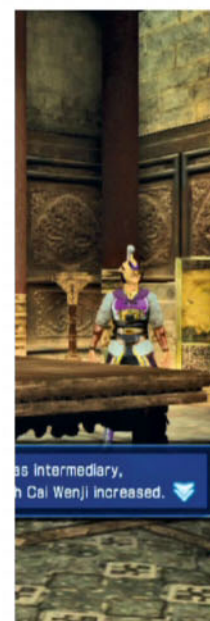


You're going to want to learn this map well - the whole game, in every mode, revolves around taking it over.

## TRENDING

#AVOICEIN THEWIND

Without the voice acting the series has become known for, you can't laugh at the terrible pronunciation. That makes us sad.



# DYNASTY WARRIORS 8: EMPIRES


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## A bromance in the Three Kingdoms?



Where do you even begin with a *Dynasty Warriors* review these days? Almost everyone knows its hack-n-slash formula by now, but newcomers to the series need to know what to expect, so forgive us for a paragraph while we recap the series' well-established mechanics...

Right, so *Dynasty Warriors* is a hack-n-slash game, and was actually one of the first games out there to use that kind of gameplay when it launched, over 20 titles ago (you get *Xtreme Warriors* and *Empires* spin-offs for each title, as well as cross-overs and ports). Choosing one of many warriors based on the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* novels, you fight through historical campaigns from Chinese history – usually on the side of Wei, Wu, Shu or – in later games – Jin. Each character has their own place in the universe, and playing through as each one yields new story elements, relationship backstories and depth. Really, though, all you're doing is mashing Y and B and hoping for the best over 10+ levels.

Now that's out of the way, let's talk about what *Dynasty Warriors 8: Empires* gets wrong. Firstly, there's no 'campaign' mode per se. There is a mode where you can jump into one of the mainstay skirmishes in the *Dynasty Warriors* mythos (The Yellow Turban Rebellion, The Battle Of Hefei, The Retreat At Guandu and so on) and swear fealty to a lord, working your way through China in a bid to take over the entire country... but each of these scenarios turns out exactly the same, altering only where your starting patch of land is. What kept us playing was the fairly deep strategy involved in attempting these hostile takeovers: in our first campaign, The Yellow Turban Rebellion, we started by swearing fealty to the ruler of Empire of He Jin, and curried favour by quashing the Yellow Turbans in the first half year (game time is measured in months, with each 'move' taking one month). As a reward, we were promoted to a Prefect of the Empire, and given land. Since we were playing as Xiahou Dun – right hand soldier of Cao Cao of the Wei kingdom – we

“We'd annexed three empires, caused another two to begin in-fighting and our peasants loved us. It was time to betray He Jin”

began recruiting officers from around the land that belonged to our sub-sect. Our land began to provide us with soldiers and building resources pretty quickly, and it was soon apparent we were the crux of the He Jin empire...

Fast-forward a year and we controlled our own province, with an army of 50,000 separate from our lord. We'd taken four more provinces (the entire north east of the country) and were constantly in conflict with what our lord was ordering us to do. We'd annexed three empires, caused another two to begin in-fighting thanks to the rumours we'd spread, and headhunted the best Wei generals from our enemies. Oh, and our peasants loved us. It was time to betray He Jin.

The game divvies out gold, materials and men to you and your army on a monthly basis, and though a lot of the depth is hidden behind a stupidly designed UI system and has menus coming out of every conceivable button press, the depth to your strategies is pretty impressive. You get to feel like a real commander, and playing the sleeper agent game like we did is immensely satisfying.

Yes, the game looks like it could have been released on the PS2, and yes, the mechanics are floaty and light and it controls like a cheap remote control airplane, but there's something to be said of how simply *fun* the light tactics of the game are. Seeing the map broken up into

all these colours and setting out on a campaign to unite them all under your rule is a big task, but once you take a portion of that land for yourself? Well, we got hooked.

Granted, this reviewer is a *Dynasty Warriors* apologist and will readily admit that the game isn't for everyone, but the additional lite-tactics veneer makes up for a lack of depth elsewhere. There's no English voiceover, for example, which is what a lot of returning players would expect, and it's a noticeable hole in the *Dynasty Warriors* experience. The battles have also gotten looser, somehow, with officer clashes relegated to brief, underwhelming encounters and in-battle 'orders' doing nothing but confuse the already dizzy AI.

So it's more of the same, but it's a bit different. The 'Empires' suffix performs as functionally as it has the last four times it's been slapped on the franchise, but the game's dwindling combat mechanics, lack of English voiceover and overall slip in production quality is indicative of the series – finally – starting to suffer budget cuts.

We may have finally overthrown our lovely ruler (he was rather kind) and continued to stomp out any challengers to our rule, but our victory felt empty. It was too easy, we didn't lose one battle and not one of our bits of land got invaded. We're sad to say, but maybe it's finally time *Dynasty Warriors* stopped coasting and began trying just a *little* bit harder.

DOM PEPPIATT

## VERDICT

Sadly enough, the franchise is slipping. The conquest of China is fun, but that's not enough to keep you around for the 10+ hours each campaign takes.

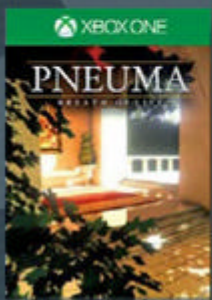
5



## GAMING EXPERIENCE



XBOX ONE



## GAME DETAILS

PUBLISHER  
**Deco Digital**

DEVELOPER  
**Deco Digital and Bevel Studios**

GAME TYPE  
**First-person puzzler**

PLAYERS  
**1**

DLC  
**N/A**

ACHIEVEMENT DIFFICULTY  
**Moderate**

NEED TO UNLOCK  
**There's a Puzzle for You (150G)**

## IN BRIEF

A first-person puzzle game in which you play as a man alone in his world and therefore believes himself to be God. Cue philosophy lectures and brain teasers.

# PNEUMA BREATH OF LIFE

[www.pneumabreathoflife.com](http://www.pneumabreathoflife.com) [/DecoDigital](https://www.facebook.com/DecoDigital) [@DecoDigital](https://twitter.com/DecoDigital)

## Solutions through seeing



It's considered brave nowadays for a game to severely limit the means you have of interacting with it, but that's exactly what *Pneuma: Breath Of Life* does. Look around and jump. Aside from rare exceptions, that's all you can do. Not that that's a negative – far from it. In fact, the minimalist means of communication you have with this first-person puzzler reflects quite brilliantly the sleek and efficient way it presents its challenges. Few games manage to incorporate their control scheme into the fundamental experience of playing a game, but *Pneuma* manages to capture exactly that.

The majority of puzzles are solved by looking in the right places; sometimes at the correct time, sometimes from the correct position, sometimes in the correct order, sometimes all three. Quite literally, focus your attention on a certain orb, floor tile or lamp and progression is granted. It sounds easy, but the skill and ingenuity with which some of the included brainteasers have been designed can make certain areas of *Pneuma's* six full chapters unpredictably taxing. Figuring out how to correctly position three doors, for instance, to allow a beam of light to penetrate a glass prism is less straightforward when said doors are interconnected through different orbs. All three doors must remain open simultaneously, but their associated orbs (which act like switches) act to open one door whilst closing another.

Another puzzle tasks you with simply standing in the correct place to see a set of lamps shining through the correct lens in the correct quantity, a puzzle that is genuinely more difficult than it sounds. Outside-of-the-box thinking is required regularly after the first couple of tutorial-esque challenges. You will get stuck on occasion and have to refresh your mind by taking a break and re-approaching the same conundrum later with a fresh outlook. However, what's on offer here isn't as challenging as the likes of *Portal* – which *Pneuma* is surely destined to be compared against ad nauseam.

That comparative ease of progression is a bit of problem once you've mastered the required patterns. After a certain

point you're so keenly zoned into what how the designers have constructed these puzzles that working out what you're supposed to do can become easier rather than harder. That's not to say that the final areas are simple or under-developed, the issue is more aligned with the fact that the limited interaction options prevent the solutions to later puzzles taking you by surprise. If you're experienced with *Portal* or other first-person puzzle games – *The Talos Principle*, for instance – then you will breeze through *Pneuma* in a day. As mentioned, you will come

up against a brick wall or two, but it's nothing a walk around the block or a trip to the shop won't fix.

Puzzles are not the only thing on offer, however, *Pneuma* also acts as a philosophical lecture of sorts. As you're solving puzzles and entering new areas, you're enticed forward with questions and ideas as to the nature of being, the idea of the 'self' and what our perception of reality might mean from a wider, objective

**"Puzzles are not the only thing on offer, Pneuma also acts as a philosophical lecture of sorts"**

perspective. In this aspect, *Pneuma* feels not overly dissimilar to *The Stanley Parable* – not least because both games convey a comparable degree of irony and often deprecating humour. The commentary here, though, lacks the quality of wit and humour required to pique your interest through the entirety of the experience and by the final chapter you'll have had your fill.

Both the commentary and puzzles fail to hold your full attention, then, which is a shame because the core ideas underpinning this project are smart and original in equal measure. Despite such flaws of pacing, it's difficult not to like *Pneuma* for managing to present a strong self-identity in the face of its obvious similarities to other, well-respected, games. It's more homage than plagiarism, a game designed by individuals that have developed an exhaustive understanding of how puzzle games of this ilk work and have decided to express themselves within its formula. The effort to achieve something as impressive and impactful as its genre peers is admirable, but the end result is lacking the polish and quality of finale required to make it stick in your mind once the day has been won.

Fans of this type of game will not be disappointed by the content on offer here, but for newcomers there are better options already available. Unless, of course, your gaming world is exclusive to the Xbox One... in which case there really isn't anything else like *Pneuma* presently available. There's a great idea here, but it's not one that manages to capture and retain that initial sense of awe all the way through to the end. Puzzles can be difficult and, at times, unique enough to provide you with jolts of satisfaction, but ultimately the structure fails to distinguish itself.

**JOHN ROBERTSON**

## VERDICT

The execution doesn't quite manage to do justice to the concept, but for fans of the puzzle genre there's still a lot to like about *Pneuma*.

**6**

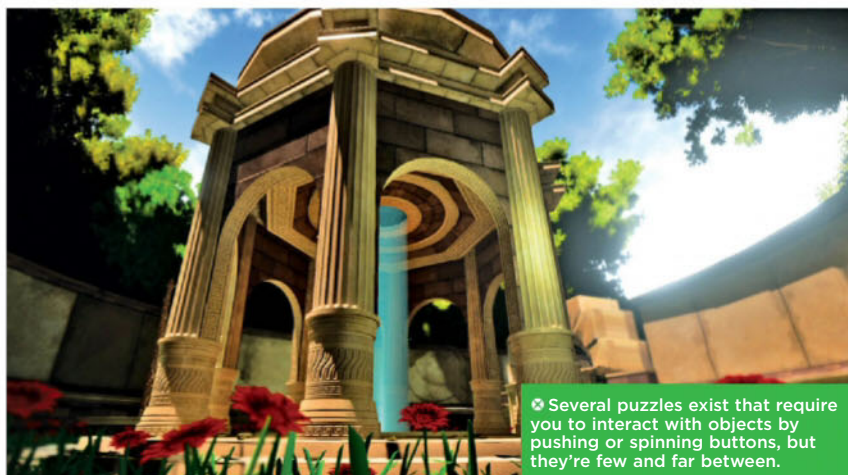


## GAMING EXPERIENCE





✦ There are a number of moments in which simply understanding what you're supposed to be doing represents the biggest hurdle of all.



✦ Several puzzles exist that require you to interact with objects by pushing or spinning buttons, but they're few and far between.



✦ At times there is significant visual contrast between *Pneuema's* different areas, embedding different chapters with a strong sense of place.



TRENDING

#BUT  
WHAT  
DOES IT  
MEAN?

■ What is the meaning of existence? *Pneuema* provides plenty of food for thought...



✦ Visuals are suitably impressive for a game built on Unreal Engine 4, although it's the art style that takes priority over technical achievement.



# REVIEW

XBOX ONE



## GAME DETAILS

PUBLISHER  
**Bandai Namco Games**

DEVELOPER  
**Dimps**

GAME TYPE  
**Hectic button masher**

PLAYERS  
**1-6**

DLC  
**Pack 1 has GT Goku, GT Trunks, GT Pan, four Time Patrol quests, 15 parallel quests, 15 special attacks and five costumes**

ACHIEVEMENT DIFFICULTY  
**Moderate**

NEED TO UNLOCK  
**All Around The Universe (15G)**

## IN BRIEF

You are the hero who will join the Time Patrol warriors and save the *DBZ* universe from an evil threat that aims to reset the very flow of time itself.

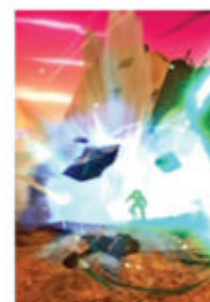
◆ With time, you will come to know, rely on and absolutely loathe Time Patrol Trunks and his atrocious 1996 haircut.



◆ The hyperactive gameplay is *Dragon Ball Xenoverse's* lone saving grace, which won't matter to fans and won't help bring in casuals.



◆ Co-op play is a high point, where *DBZ's* innately frantic nature is ramped up.



## TRENDING

#IWANTLESS

■ The social arena is a nice idea, but players will quickly tire off it and just want to get to the battles.



# DRAGON BALL XENOVERSE

[www.dragonballxenoverse.com](http://www.dragonballxenoverse.com) [f /DBZ.videogames](https://www.facebook.com/DBZ.videogames) [@dbxenoverse](https://twitter.com/dbxenoverse)

## Saving the world, again...



The madder, more frantic, more absolutely bonkers, the better. That's a *Dragon Ball Z* game. Much like the eponymous anime series, they operate on a very simple premise. Narrative elegance or gameplay innovation be damned, if it's colourful, moves fast, has limbs numbering at about four and shouts a lot, it probably qualifies as a character in a *DBZ* incarnation. And that's just fine.

*Dragon Ball Xenoverse* certainly greets the player in true *DBZ* fashion. As soon as you start the game, you're tossed headfirst into a battle in Age 762, featuring you, an enemy, and a mysterious onlooker. As soon as you mash the poor, unsuspecting controller until that enemy is dispatched, you're warped five years forward, where a new hapless victim presents itself. However, as a third frantic melee wraps up, the mystery character unveils itself, in the process altering the course of history, and thus setting up what will be a Time Patrol game. Oh, you can create your character now, by the way.

*Dragon Ball Xenoverse* hooks you in with a great premise. The storyline is an original one, conceived especially for the game. Bandai Namco has embraced the capabilities of an eighth-generation console by throwing all it has into an immersive, full-3D environment, with enemies coming at you from literally all directions in suitably hectic fashion. A social arena has also been created especially for *XenoVerse*; Toki Toki City, where you travel around to talk to NPCs, kitting yourself out and – most importantly – taking on offline and online quests and Time Patrol missions.

But despite all that promise and this dollop of an aperitif, *Dragon Ball: Xenoverse* leaves a disappointingly bland aftertaste. Despite a grander ambition than most other *DBZ* offerings, which must be commended, *Dragon Ball Xenoverse's* problems are simply too numerous and hindering to ignore. First of all, let's revisit the opening statement. For a game franchise

that trades on its insta-mashing delirium, *XenoVerse's* cutscenes are both too many and much too long. For the first two hours of playing the game. Actual in-battle gameplay will total about ten to 12 minutes. This is not an exaggeration, but a terrifyingly sad reality. Thankfully, due to the frontloading of information and the depth of story depleting quite quickly, these will grower smaller and further between as the game wears on.

Then there is Toki Toki City and all it stands for. The idea of a whimsical little village in which to wander around for quests, info, interaction and character customisation to stand in for the alternative option of simply providing a menu is intriguing.

However, the execution is absolutely godawful. In order to go from the mixing of items and potions to selecting a quest, you must run around a needlessly spread-out, three-pronged cityscape, without the option of shortcuts or speeding things up in case you actually want to just *play some goddamn Dragon Ball*. And if that's not enough, then the Toki Toki City environment is inexplicably static, given how rich and interactive the battlefields are. In a battle, your souped-up Saiyan can fell a tree a mile away by

summoning an almighty ball of luminous energy and throwing it at the enemy, while hovering in mid-air. In Toki Toki City, he can't jump over a park bench. In one part of the game, you'll feel like a *god*. In the other, you're barely capable of simple interaction with everyday items. And unfortunately, you'll have to spend way too much time in the latter. Oh, and the music in there is probably not too far removed from being stuck in a Japanese shopping mall elevator *for all of eternity*.

Good job, then, that the gameplay is somewhat entertaining and rewarding. While the button-mashing element will become repetitive quite early on, the choice of different types of missions keeps things interesting – for a while, at least. Camera moves jar a little at times, such as when impeded by environmental barriers, but the action is suitably frantic for the most part. Co-op battles against numerous enemies are the most fun, where you have to choose your position, stay constantly vigilant and combine several tactics to succeed. Just dashing to the next enemy and mashing the X and Y buttons won't cut it, kids. Well, not always, at least. There is also a refreshingly wide array of playable characters on offer, or over 40 in total, and their different specialities really do affect the gameplay for each one.

Finally, though, credit must go to the fan service shown by the developer. It's a definite nod to the immense fan-art community found online, with choices in character customisation and even some all-new creations. It's also a clear indicator of who this game is for; if you're not a diehard *Dragon Ball Z* fan, *XenoVerse* almost certainly won't turn you into one.

✪ ERLINGUR EINARSSON

## VERDICT

It should have been an immersive experience with bonkers *DBZ* gameplay mixed into it. Unfortunately, the gameplay is the only part it gets right.

6

“For the first two hours of playing the game, actual in-battle gameplay will total about ten to 12 minutes”



## GAMING EXPERIENCE



XBOX ONE



GAME  
DETAILS

PUBLISHER  
**Microsoft  
Studios**

DEVELOPER  
**Frontier**

GAME TYPE  
**Creation/  
destruction sim**

PLAYERS  
**1**

DLC  
**N/A**

ACHIEVEMENT  
DIFFICULTY  
**Moderate**

NEED TO  
UNLOCK  
**Rodney!  
(25G)**

## IN BRIEF

In the future, a faceless corporation is turning entire cities into amusement parks. Your job is to design and test the rides, and demolish any buildings that get in your way.

# SCREAMRIDE



xbox.com/screamride



/Screamride



@Screamride

Life is a rollercoaster, just gotta... spend hours building it



*Screamride* is like Drayton Manor, Gulliver's Kingdom, or any of those lesser theme parks. It looks like it should be fun – there are lively colours and sounds, and lots of different things to try – but ultimately, it's not quite there. This

is a well-intentioned game, and you certainly can't criticise it for lack of effort, but, well, maybe that's the problem. Maybe it's because *Screamride* seems so desperate to entertain you that it ends up falling flat. The creation mechanics are a good example of that. *Screamride* has a campaign, which we'll get to later, but its biggest draw is the *Rollercoaster Tycoon*-esque sandbox mode, which lets you create and customise an amusement park to your heart's content. There are hundreds of different toys to play with, ranging from loop-the-loops to turbo chargers, and you can even design the colour and shape of your park's surroundings, tweaking everything from the pavements to the foliage.

But although that level of customisation is supposed to be a draw, a way to let players express themselves and have fun, *Screamride*'s controls make any creation an awkward process. It's perhaps a cliché, but *Screamride* is the perfect example of how PC-type gameplay clashes with console controls. Rifling through all the different rollercoaster parts using the Xbox pad, instead of a mouse, is a laborious process. Same goes for piecing your park together – since you can't freely move and click a cursor, you have to tap shoulder buttons to cycle through every single component on the map until you reach the one that you want to work on. There's an admirable level of depth to *Screamride*'s sandbox mode, but it's hardly accessible. Instead of spending time crafting and perfecting a masterpiece, you'll likely become frustrated – or bored – and abandon your park half-finished.

*Screamride*'s career mode is a little less frustrating and a lot more structured. It's certainly not lacking in decent moments. You have three different level types. First is the eponymous *Screamride*, which sees you steering a rollercoaster cart around a track, trying to generate the most screams and excitement from your punters. You earn points by leaning into

corners, pushing the cart up onto two wheels, going fast and pulling off perfect starts, a la *Mario Kart*. Once your passengers are sufficiently terrified, you graduate to the next track. It's not quite as fast or exciting as it sounds – it's no *Trials Fusion* – but the *Screamride* mode is at least idle fun.

Then there's Demolition Expert, the second level type and easily the best time you'll have in *Screamride*. Here, you have to launch giant metal balls (which for some reason are filled with people) at skyscrapers, the idea being to knock them down as efficiently and explosively as possible. Tapping LT and RT adjusts the power of your launch. One you're prepped, holding down A lets you fine tune your aim before firing the ball directly at the target building's weak spot.

You can usually cause mega damage just by clipping off a couple of choice chunks of concrete, but if you botch the launch completely, there's an "aftertouch" feature, similar to *Burnout*'s crash mode, that lets you steer your

wrecking ball in mid-air. Ping it off a skyscraper's supporting wall, and the whole ruddy lot will come down, scoring you some major points. Every destruction is captured from multiple camera angles, which you can cycle through, and is modelled beautifully, with lumps of rubble falling about at random based on how you hit the building. There's an entire game to be made out of the Demolition Expert mode. It's undoubtedly *Screamride*'s high point and in stark contrast to the last campaign level type, Engineer.

In Engineer, you have to fill in missing chunks of existing rollercoasters, using a limited amount of track and toys to bridge gaps and up the riders' excitement rate. In theory, Engineer should be the counter-balance to *Screamride*'s convoluted sandbox mode. There's still room to customise and express yourself, but rather than wade through endless devices and parts, you only get what you need. However, the sense of reward in Engineer mode is nil. It's not like you finish your rollercoaster, throw open the park gates and, like the *Tycoon* games, watch your bank account explode as people cram onto your creation, reminding you that you're a creative effing genius. You just hit "test ride", and observe as a cart goes around the track, checking to make sure it's good enough. The payoff just isn't there.

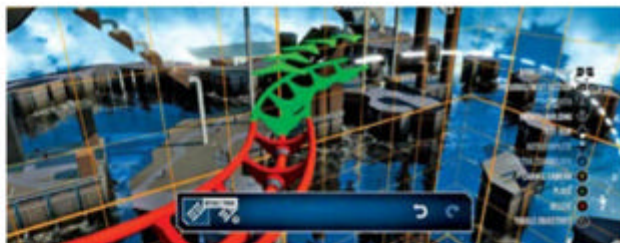
Frontier, the maker of *Screamride*, doesn't seem to realise that since you aren't actually riding the rollercoasters – as in, *actually* riding them – you're not going to have as much fun as the in-game punters. The developer leans heavily on the fact that amusement parks in real-life are fun, and seems to believe that just having rollercoasters in *Screamride* makes *Screamride* as fun as actual rollercoasters. Which just isn't true. And although it's a noble effort to entertain, and has a few moments, *Screamride*, for the most part is plain, slow and never as "ca-ra-zy" as it thinks it is.

ED SMITH

## VERDICT

*Screamride* sincerely wants to entertain you. But it's bogged down by menus, fiddly controls and – dare we say it – too many customisation options.

6



## GAMING EXPERIENCE





Some 'coasters aren't designed to join up...



As long as some riders are left in your rollercoaster, it's fine.

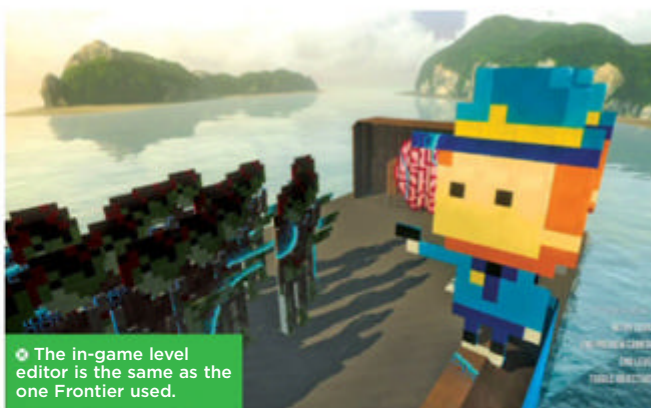


Make sure you lean into corners when testing the rollercoasters.



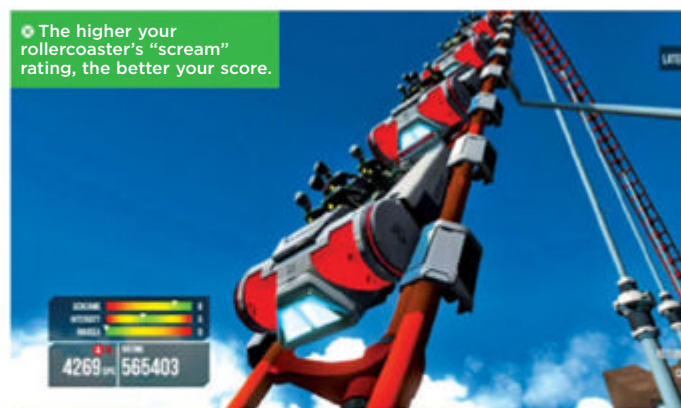
## TRENDING #SEEYA

How many skyscrapers can you knock down with one of *Screamride*'s wrecking balls? Buildings? More like KILLdings. Yeah.



The in-game level editor is the same as the one *Frontier* used.

The higher your rollercoaster's "scream" rating, the better your score.



XBOX ONE



GAME  
DETAILS

PUBLISHER  
**Koei Tecmo**

DEVELOPER  
**Team Ninja**

GAME TYPE  
**Beat-'em-up**

PLAYERS  
**1-2**

DLC

**Costumes. A lot of costumes...**

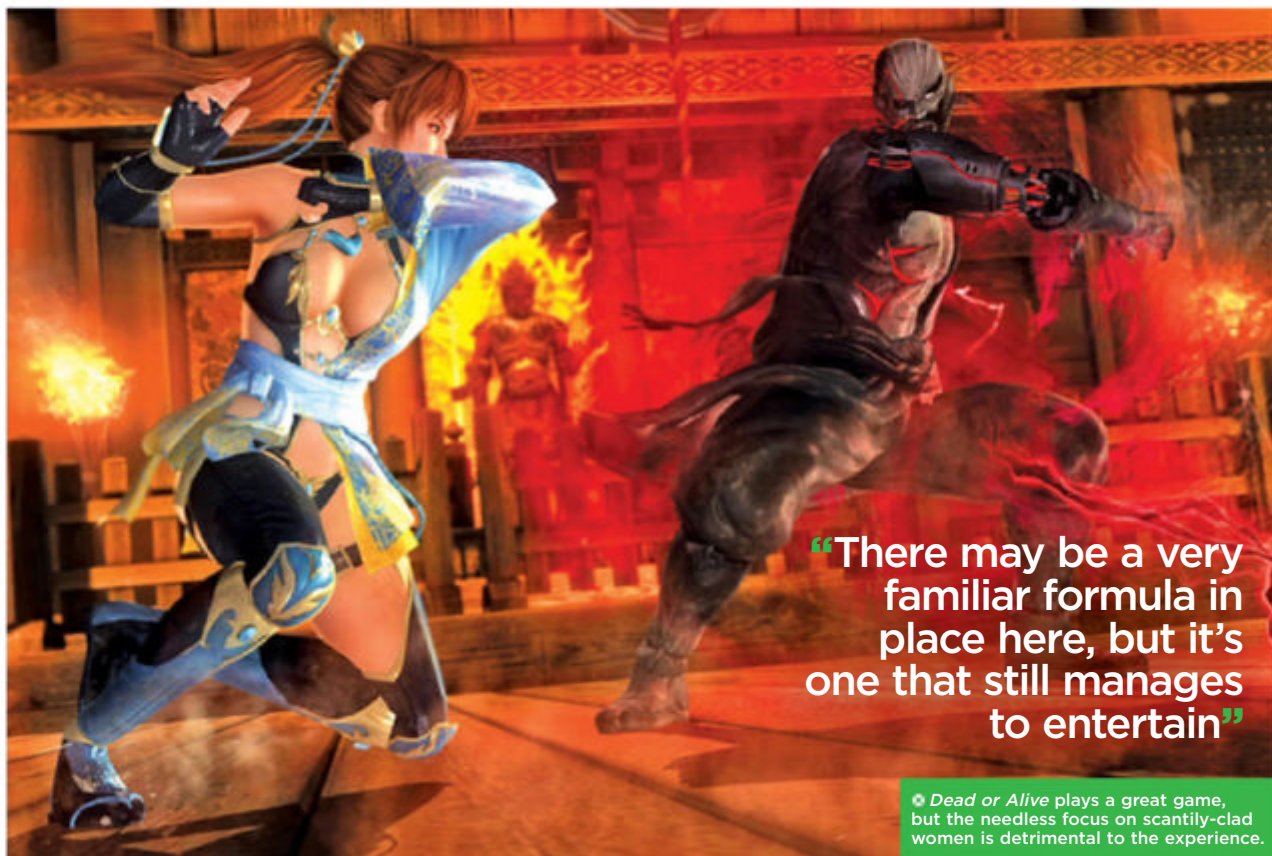
ACHIEVEMENT  
DIFFICULTY  
**Moderate**

NEED TO  
UNLOCK

**Failure Teaches Success - See 8 Characters' Losing Poses (30G)**

## IN BRIEF

Team Ninja's long-running fighting game returns once again to make its debut on the Xbox One and deliver the most 'complete' version of *Dead Or Alive 5* yet. Expect brawls, beatings and bosoms...



"There may be a very familiar formula in place here, but it's one that still manages to entertain"

❖ *Dead or Alive* plays a great game, but the needless focus on scantily-clad women is detrimental to the experience.

# DEAD OR ALIVE 5 LAST ROUND

[www.teamninja-studio.com/doa5/uk](http://www.teamninja-studio.com/doa5/uk)

[/tecnoeurope](https://www.facebook.com/tecnoeurope)

[@TeamNINJASudio](https://twitter.com/TeamNINJASudio)

The fullest version yet



*Dead Or Alive 5: Last Round* is the fighting game for people who are terrified of fighting games. While Team Ninja's latest does itself no favours thanks to its obsession with a ridiculously exaggerated version of the female form, the core principles in place means it remains incredibly accessible for people who may feel a little intimidated by other standouts within the genre.

*Dead Or Alive*'s greatest asset is its solid foundation. While there are plenty of design choices aimed at giving beginners a rush of satisfaction that makes them want to dive in further - at first even smashing one button a few times will result in a combo - those that do dedicate more time to it will find there's plenty of fighting depth here. More complicated sequences; off-beat rhythm combinations; the constant desire to successfully 'stun' your opponent in order to maximise damage. There may be a very familiar formula in place here, but it's one that still manages to entertain.

There's a good chance you're aware of this, however, and are more interested in understanding what *Last Round* brings to the Xbox One. Unfortunately, the answer is 'not much'. As the name suggests, this is a coming together of all the *Dead Or Alive 5* content already out there including characters, costumes, hairstyles and modes. There are some exclusive items included such as two new faces to the roster

- Honoka and Raidou - but the former especially doesn't feel as integrated or as well thought-out as you may have hoped. An addition for addition's sake seems to be more than an appropriate way to describe it.

While there's a slight increase in visual sheen, as there should be, it's nothing to write home about, with the main issues stemming from the odd technical problem you may encounter. Playing online especially seems to be a lottery in terms of the experience you'll receive, a huge shame given that this is, more than likely, going to be where *Last Round* shows off its longevity.

The usual questionable attire aside, *Dead Or Alive 5* remains a fast, slick beat-'em-up with the added bonus of being incredibly accessible and fun. It's doubtful you'll need this if you've already invested in other iterations with a '5' slapped on the end - this is neither a serious departure nor a huge offering of new content. For anyone who's not taken the plunge, however, this is the version you need.

❖ **SIMON MILLER**

## VERDICT

*DOA5* is a great fighting game at its core. *Last Round*'s extra bells and whistles, while engaging enough, just don't add much real significance.

7

XBOX ONE

XBOX ONE  
**ROUNDABOUT****GAME DETAILS**PUBLISHER  
**No Goblin**DEVELOPER  
**In-house**GAME TYPE  
**Arcade**PLAYERS  
**1**DLC  
**N/A**ACHIEVEMENT  
DIFFICULTY  
**Hard**NEED TO  
UNLOCK  
**Fly Like An  
Eagle (10G)****IN BRIEF**

Take control of rotating limo driver Georgio Manos as she chauffeurs the people of Roundabout around the city at speed in search of fast times and high scores.



# ROUNDABOUT

[www.roundaboutgame.com](http://www.roundaboutgame.com)
[/nogoblin](https://www.facebook.com/nogoblin)
[@RoundaboutGame](https://twitter.com/RoundaboutGame)

You spin me right round, baby



Your intuition immediately tells you that the bizarre concept of *Roundabout* shouldn't work. You control a constantly rotating limo that you must intricately navigate around a city as you ferry passengers to their destinations as quickly as possible. It's a bit like playing an isometric *Crazy Taxi* with a friend constantly knocking your elbow to send you into a spin and make it as difficult as possible. When you first boot it up and find yourself careening into buildings, cars and other objects, exploding every ten seconds, *Roundabout* feels like a dud. Give yourself time to get your head around how to weave your way past obstacles in your spinning automobile, however, and it reveals itself to be a fun and surprisingly sophisticated arcade game.

Adding to that sense of fun are the live-action cutscenes you get whenever you pick up a new customer, stylised to create a Seventies B-movie feel. We suspect that B-movie style was selected at least in part to excuse the terrible production and voice acting in these scenes, but whether that's the case or not, *Roundabout* gets away with it. There's a sense that you and the developers are both in on the joke, that you both know what they're doing is a bit crap, and for that reason, the shoddiness of *Roundabout's* cutscenes comes off as endearing, rather than annoying.

It is, however, frustrating to see that lack of quality occasionally creep over into the game itself. There were a few instances where we found ourselves just getting annoyed at the game's infrequent shoddiness. For example, we found ourselves being respawned into situations where we'd instantly die without being able to do anything about it. Fortunately, those moments are rare and shouldn't be seen as emblematic of a game that's mechanically sound and well-constructed for the most part.

Indeed, there's a great deal of satisfaction to be drawn from mastering the act of driving through *Roundabout's* colourful world, solving fast-paced spacial puzzles and besting your friend's times on leaderboards. Add excellent pacing, an off-the-wall story that pitches its silly, fun-loving tone perfectly and plenty of potential for replayability to the formula and *Roundabout* becomes a game that's easy to recommend.

**PAUL WALKER-EMIG**

**VERDICT**

Minor technical issues aside, *Roundabout's* unique concept and cheesy yet personable performances make it a pleasure to play.

7

XBOX ONE



## GAME DETAILS

PUBLISHER  
**Vector Unit**

DEVELOPER  
**In-house**

GAME TYPE  
**Water ski racer**

PLAYERS  
**1-6**

DLC  
**N/A**

ACHIEVEMENT  
DIFFICULTY  
**Easy**

NEED TO  
UNLOCK  
**Stunt Expert  
(58G)**

## IN BRIEF

Race against the clock and your opponent in this rocket-powered jet water racer, where performing death defying stunts earns you vital speed boosts that you'll need to strategically use to finish first.



# RIPTIDE GP2

[www.vectorunit.com](http://www.vectorunit.com) [/VectorUnit](https://www.facebook.com/VectorUnit) [@vectorunit](https://twitter.com/vectorunit)

Simplicity isn't always the best option



*Riptide GP2* shoots itself in the foot by showing a lack of ambition. Try as it might, it just struggles to shake away the notion that this is a mobile game port struggling to make the step up in class. All the ingredients for a thrilling wave racer are here, but tedious repetition just over-rides its great looks.

We'll start with the playability. *Riptide* has serious pick-up-and-play appeal, as you'd expect from a series that has made its name on iOS and Android (there is a PC version too). It'll take you a few races to earn enough achievements points to be able to upgrade your bike with boosts in power, acceleration, top speed and, very importantly, handling. Your first bike thinks left-hand slides are optional, so it's a struggle to claim victory against a speedy AI. But once you notch your first win and get upgrading your bike (there is an abundance of customisations to make and new stunts to unlock), the difficulty level decreases dramatically, to the point where you have to be pretty bad to finish anywhere but in first place. The balance between your upgradability and the AI is all over the shop, and a black mark on the game for anyone looking for a challenge.

The Career mode, as with so many games of this ilk, is the highlight. Start at the bottom, move through the

levels and end up a superstar with an unbeatable bike. As a result, it all feels very samey, and that's despite a wide variety of great-looking futuristic landscapes and its fast-paced nature. Unfortunately, there is no online multiplayer, despite this being a feature in the game's mobile offerings. You do get a fun six-player split-screen multiplayer mode, but on this reviewer's 32-inch TV, that was a step too far. There's also a VR challenge mode where you race against ghost friends, however it lacks any of the excitement of a standard multiplayer.

Ultimately, *Riptide* is built for short, sharp gaming sessions and still ideally suited to mobile. It's a more than serviceable game, offering a simple learning curve that makes you feel like you've been playing the game for hours, but if you're looking for a *Hydro Thunder Hurricane* upgrade or a next-gen *Wave Race*, there's nothing here for you. Maybe next time.

PHILIP MORRIS

## VERDICT

*Riptide* will provide fun from the start, but it doesn't have the depth to keep advanced gamers coming back for more. The novelty wears thin.

6

## XBOX ONE



## GAME DETAILS

PUBLISHER  
**HE SAW**DEVELOPER  
**In-house**GAME TYPE  
**Comic book shooter**PLAYERS  
**1-2**DLC  
**N/A**ACHIEVEMENT  
DIFFICULTY  
**Hard**NEED TO  
UNLOCK  
**Nutcracker  
(20G)**

## IN BRIEF

When his favourite dancer is stolen by a rival gang, mobster and all-round bad guy Tony Luciano embarks on a personal vendetta to get her back at any cost in this old-school rail shooter.



♦ We hope you like the look of this fellow because you'll be seeing him again, and again, and again.

"Where you'll stand on the game's attitude will likely depend on your sense of humour"

# BLUE ESTATE

[www.blueestatethegame.com](http://www.blueestatethegame.com) [f/BlueEstateGame](https://www.facebook.com/BlueEstateGame) [@BlueEstateGame](https://twitter.com/BlueEstateGame)

Shoot first and... shoot some more



There's a pretty thin line between edgy satire and insensitive idiocy, and more often than not *Blue Estate* falls heavily in the latter category. Despite being fitted with Kinect controls, the game is an old-school rail shooter through and through, and while it offers a couple of neat twists on the standard genre formula, it still feels firmly stuck in the past.

Players can choose to take on the game's Story mode solo or with a friend in co-op, but either way the experience is much the same. The protagonists work their way through a series of bland environments gunning down waves and waves of identical enemies, with the occasional whack-a-mole or sequential headshot mini-game thrown in to mix things up slightly. A couple of Kinect gestures aim to add a little more personality to the tedious shooting gallery – slicking back Tony Luciano's hair when it falls across the screen for example – but after a while they simply become part of the drudgery.

Admittedly, *Blue Estate's* gangster-revenge storyline is enjoyably wacky in parts, and though it's hardly pushing the Xbox One hardware, the comic book aesthetic makes for a few creative graphical touches. But though there is the basis of an entertaining pulp fiction-style yarn here, it's nigh on impossible to get past the game's crass humour, poorly-judged dialogue and willingness to offend pretty

much everybody. Where you'll stand on the game's attitude will likely depend on your sense of humour, but *Blue Estate* is definitely more of a crass *Duke Nukem Forever* than it is a clever *Grand Theft Auto V*.

It might be easier to forgive *Blue Estate's* more obnoxious elements if it excelled in its gameplay, but it doesn't. The rail shooter genre is about as antiquated as they come these days, and aside from its Kinect integration and distinctive source material, the game doesn't really add anything new to the mix. Levels are short, but repetitive, the motion controls are floaty at best (and frustratingly unresponsive at worst), and the game is punctuated by a series of pretty awful boss battles. Completing levels in Story allows you to replay them in Arcade mode, but aside from chasing high scores and hunting down achievements there's little reason to go back. Rail shooters are ripe for innovation this generation, but *Blue Estate* isn't the game that's going to reignite the genre.

♦ **ROSS HAMILTON**

## VERDICT

Wonky motion controls, repetitive gameplay, poor visuals and misjudged humour combine in *Blue Estate* for a short, sour dose of shooter action.

3

XBOX ONE

XBOX ONE

Unmechanical  
extended

## GAME DETAILS

PUBLISHER  
**Grip Games**

DEVELOPERS  
**Talawa Games,  
Grip Games**

GAME TYPE  
**Puzzle**

PLAYERS  
**1**

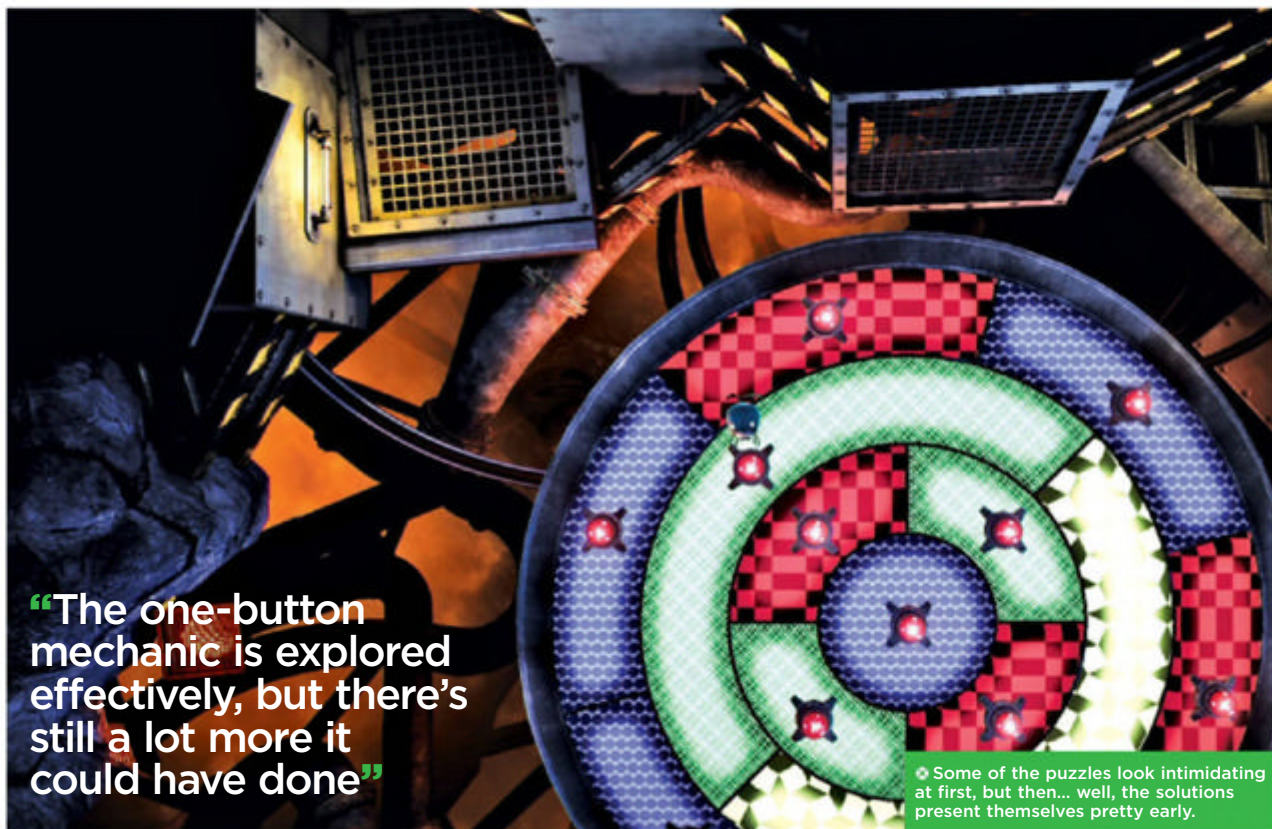
DLC  
**No**

ACHIEVEMENT  
DIFFICULTY  
**Moderate**

NEED TO  
UNLOCK  
**Freediver (42G)**

## IN BRIEF

A physics-based exploration game awaits you, with every room made of puzzles to test you in a weird natural-yet-unnatural world. There's not really any story, per se, just a bunch of aesthetic weirdness



**"The one-button mechanic is explored effectively, but there's still a lot more it could have done"**

Some of the puzzles look intimidating at first, but then... well, the solutions present themselves pretty early.

# UNMECHANICAL EXTENDED

[www.unmechanical.net](http://www.unmechanical.net) [f /unmechanical](https://www.facebook.com/unmechanical) [@unmechanical](https://twitter.com/unmechanical)

All things serve the beam



As your stumpy robot character wakes up with beeps and boops, you instantly get a feel of how heavy and weighted it feels – a single propeller on your head can barely lift your weight, and your slack, useless arms hang limp at your side. 'Okay,' you think, 'I've got to rely on gravity.' You quickly learn that you can interact with the world – a world that's somewhere between indie sleeper hit *Machinarium* and the grimly anti-industrial *Oddworld* – by means of a weak tractor beam. It's like the point-and-clicks of old, but sadly, with less depth. The one-button mechanic is explored effectively, sure, but there's still a lot more it could have done.

The presentation of the world is fantastic, granted, and the uncomfortable mix of natural oddities with mechanised structures keeps your interest through the whole three hours the game takes to finish. Thing is, in that time, you get very little given to you in terms of story or exposition: even if you're looking for any kind of environmental storytelling and whatnot, you'll come away detached, uneducated in *Unmechanical's* world. When you've got puzzle games like *The Swapper* out there doing the whole 'mute game' thing so well, it seems a shame that *Unmechanical* would just throw its world away like that.

The puzzles, at least, are interesting. *Unmechanical* started its life as a student project, and there's definitely

a sense of that fresh creativity within its mossy depths. From Bop It! style mimicry to reflection-based mirror puzzles, *Unmechanical* will force you to think outside the box on occasion to overcome its trickier areas. The pacing is a little off for a puzzler, though: we found ourselves dashing through most of the game, only to spend most of our playtime smashing our head against a double-threat puzzle. That's not necessarily a bad thing but when your game is only three hours long, you don't want to spend a third of it in one place.

*Unmechanical Extended* is great if you've got an afternoon spare and fancy some mid-grade puzzling. This isn't *Monkey Island* or *Machinarium*, though, so don't expect to have these puzzles seep into your mind and keep you awake. Its presentation is lovely, and the one-button mechanic starts off well, but the further you pick your way through the game, the more the whole concept becomes a little undone. Luckily, due to its brevity, you finish it before you can really get a look behind the curtain.

**DOM PEPPIATT**

## VERDICT

*Unmechanical* is held back by its short length, and its lack of narrative. There are some inventive puzzles, but don't expect anything revolutionary.

6

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## ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO STAYING ALIVE BATTLEFIELD HARDLINE

ALL OF THE TIPS AND TRICKS YOU NEED TO REIGN SUPREME

**B**attlefield Hardline is almost here, and it's looking in much better shape than *Battlefield 4* was at launch. *Dead Space* developer Visceral Games has taken the *Battlefield* formula, given it a fresh cops and robbers coat of paint, and refined a lot of the mechanics that have been bugging us for years. That said, you don't necessarily need to alter your well honed *Battlefield* skills, but with a plethora of new game modes, abilities and gear options being introduced, **X-ONE** has scoured the beta to deliver the best hints and tips to help you dominate come

launch day. If you're new to *Battlefield*, it can seem imposing. With maps built to hold 64 players – not to mention a litany of land and air vehicles – it can be pretty crazy trying to find your feet. But take it slow and you'll pick up the ropes. This isn't *Call Of Duty* or *Titanfall*; *Battlefield* is all about working to the objectives, taking it slow and steady and using dominating team tactics to find victory. Get some friends together, join a squad and prepare to enter one of the most chaotic games to ever grace Xbox Live.

### PLAY THE OBJECTIVE



**An impressive K/D ratio is certainly something to shout about, if you're playing a different game franchise.** Do you want the Battlepacks, ranks, and dollar bills to buy any weapons you want and make your friends jealous? Then play the objective.

Capture Control Points, Hotwire those vehicles and get that loot to the chopper. If you want to play TDM, go play TDM, but if you're in an objective-based game mode – of which there are many – playing the objective will always grant more lucrative rewards.

### PLAY IN SQUADS



**Whether you're with friends or playing solo, try to jump into full squads as often as you can.** Not only will you be able to spawn directly on your team-mates – more often than not you'll get straight into a firefight – but you'll be able to quickly earn EXP by

playing specifically to your class role. Drop ammo, heal up your team, or repair your vehicles; helping your squad out will give you bonus rewards. Oh, and don't forget to Spot approaching enemies with RB – it can be the difference between life and death.

## FORGET BATTLEFIELD 4



This might be easier said than done, but it's time to give *Battlefield Hardline* itself a chance to succeed. Visceral has done an outstanding job making *Battlefield Hardline* feel like more than an overbearing expansion pack to *Battlefield 4*, so give it

a chance before you let some of these bad vibes surrounding DICE bring you down. While many mechanics and weapons might feel familiar, you'll need to adapt your strategies to the new cops and robbers aesthetic if you want to secure victory.

## STOP RUNNING



*Battlefield* is not *COD*. Obvious, right? Wrong. It's shocking how so many players approach the two similarly, then complain when they start getting massively pwned. There might be 63 other players around you, but slow and

steady wins the game – and lets you score easy headshots. If you attempt to ADS your weapon after sprinting, you'll notice it takes a split second longer. Be brisk, use those *Halo* strafing skills, and settle in behind cover if it gets hairy.

## FIRING LINES



It's tough to get into the *Battlefield* flow, so keep this under consideration if you're packing an assault rifle, carbine or sniper: aim in front of a moving target. Those that do choose to run everywhere can avoid a lot of gunfire with raw

speed, but will be slow to react due to the ADS penalty discussed above. Instead of meeting your opponent head on, assume a crouched position, aim slightly ahead of the fleeing enemy and fire in short, head-aligned, bursts.

## HOTWIRE TOP TIPS

Hotwire is *Battlefield*'s newest and most awesome game mode, pitting both cops and robbers after roaming objective points in search of victory. It's great fun, but has a bit of a learning curve. You'll want to follow these hot tips if you want any chance of ruling the roads...

## LET'S RIDE



Hotwire is all about controlling moving vehicles to win the round. Stop messing around on foot, jump in a car and start looking to control the VIP vehicles.

## MECHANIC'S PARADISE



The Mechanic has the ability to equip a Repair Tool: use it to keep control vehicles active, even after they take damage. Sit in the passenger seat and get to work.

## TRACKER DART



Like in *BFBC2*, the Tracker Dart can be fired at a vehicle – it will then be tracked on the mini-map, letting a team mate line up an all important RPG shot.

## CRUISE WITH FRIENDS



Get a full squad of four in a car, press in the right thumbstick to lean out of the window and protect your wheels!

## SOUND OF THE POLICE



Want to really enjoy *Hardline*? Press B to cycle through songs on the radio. It has a fantastic library of music to cruise to.

## TRUST NO-ONE



By its very nature, *Battlefield Hardline* is a team-based game.

That said, when it comes to vehicles, trust no-one. Unless you're in a squad with friends; getting in/on cars, bikes and

helicopters with randoms can be the quickest way to earn a cheap death. For every incredible chopper pilot you might encounter, there are ten idiots who career into bridges.

## BUY WEAPONS, QUICKLY



Both the Operator and Mechanic classes start their multiplayer careers with an RO933 Carbine.

To be frank, it's pretty useless. Once you nail 20 perps you'll be able to attach a scope, making it

deadly up close, but there's little you can do about the wild recoil. Play the objective, play in your squad and get as much cash as you can quickly. You really won't regret it.

## CHECK YOUR BATTLEPACKS



**Battlepacks have changed slightly, and for the better.**

In fact, you'll want to open these up as soon as you get them. If you're a *Battlefield* newbie, it can be easy enough to overlook them, we sure did once

upon a time, but this is the quickest and easiest way to unlock new weapon customisations. Better still, you'll be given a voucher letting you choose which weapon to fit your new stock or scope to.

## UNDERSTANDING SUPPRESSION



**Suppression penalties aren't as drastic in *Hardline* as they were in *BF4*.** For those out of the loop: while under fire, or in a location that was under heavy fire, your weapon sway and recoil would be

drastically increased. The person laying down the suppressing fire would also be granted bonus EXP for keeping the enemies. While you can still ADS just fine while under fire, it'll be a little tougher.

# CLASS BREAKDOWN

LIKE PAST BATTLEFIELD GAMES, *HARDLINE* LETS PLAYERS CHOOSE BETWEEN ONE OF FOUR CLASSES. THESE CAN BE FREELY SWITCHED BETWEEN AFTER YOU DIE, AND CATER TO A NUMBER OF DIFFERENT PLAY STYLES

### OPERATOR



The Operator is essentially an assault/medic hybrid. They are always on the front lines, rocking an assault rifle and taking on objectives. They also have the capacity to heal team mates with a medikit and revive downed friends to get them back in action.

### MECHANIC



The role of the engineer has never been more important, with modes like Hotwire. The Mechanic packs a Carbine and specialises in repairing and destroying vehicles. The Repair Tool can fix, their RPGs can explode – it's easy to move up the scoreboard as this class.

### ENFORCER



If you're looking to support your Squad by laying heavy suppressing fire and covering movement to objectives, Enforcer is definitely the role for you. The primary weapon focus is LMGs, while difficult to control, they offer unrivalled stopping power.

### PROFESSIONAL



If you think camping is a legitimate strategy, go Professional and never look back. As the sniper of the group, expect to use Grappling Hooks to find new vantage points, and patience to wait out your enemies. Just don't be surprised when they swarm on you with force.

## ONE WORD: TASER



**So why would you sacrifice your deadly side arm for a C62 Cew Taser?** Well, the Taser is an awesome way to take down an enemy. Not only do you get to watch them writhe in pain from shock – and embarrassment from

being dispatched by a non-lethal takedown – but there's always a chance you can interrogate your victim. Sure, this leaves you open to a headshot, but a successful interrogation reveals all nearby enemies on the mini-map.

## USE THE EQUIPMENT



**It's important to always use your equipment – not only does it help your team out, but it's also a quick way to earn bonus cash quickly.** Drop medipacks and ammo boxes as often as possible and, if you can, revive anyone

that falls near you. Also, be on the look out for Grapple Hooks and Zip Lines. Not only do these give you new options to travel the map with, but they can give you great access to otherwise unavailable vantage points.

## TRY HACKER MODE



**Hacker is *Hardline's* version of Commander mode in *Battlefield 4*.** As a Hacker, you don't need to engage in combat to help out – instead you can sit back and support from a distance. As the Hacker you can use GPS Spotting

to mark enemies, use Trojan Virus Uploads to hack cameras – letting you locate objectives – and then there's also Shutdown Protocols that temporarily keep your opponent from capturing bases in Conquest. Tricky but a lot of fun.

## HEIST TOP TIPS

Heist is another brand new game mode coming to *Hardline*, which pits cops versus robbers in epic bank heists. These get hectic, so stick with your team and be ready to fight in tightly packed corridors to win.

## PLAY TO WIN



It can be easy to fall into the TDM trap, but always be playing to your objective here. Always be ready to either guard to raid the vault if you want to win.

## BEWARE OF SNIPERS



Due to the open nature of the maps, snipers can take total control if you let them. Be aware of tall skyscrapers and cover positions, especially if you're the bagman.

## STAY ALIVE



Can't wait for those heals? Run up to a team-mate and press X to take a medikit from them – you'll regen ten health per second as long as you stay close.



# FAR CRY 4

## REVISITED

Welcome (back) to the jungle

It may be difficult to believe, but there's a way to improve on a game that actively encourages you to take down helicopters with an RPG from the saddle of a mighty elephant. There's a way to make a game that pushes you to harness the terrifying brute strength of tigers to clear out outposts – a game that gives you the tools to aerial assault enemies from the peak of a mountain – *even batshit crazier*. If you haven't had the chance to sample *Far Cry 4*'s array of multiplayer modes, it might be time to return to Ubisoft's most competent release of 2014.

Inviting a co-op partner into your world alters the game considerably, increasing the fun factor without diluting what made it great to begin with. Planning stealthy attacks on heavily guarded fortresses gives you the freedom to really mess around with *Far Cry 4*'s fantastic physics and AI systems – twisting and warping them to create a special brand of emergent chaos that we've come to love revelling in.

You'll have the opportunity to attempt some truly wild combinations of firepower, traversal and wildlife, especially if you're in constant communication with your co-op partner. Sniping





**“It creates a special brand of emergent chaos that we’ve come to love revelling in”**

marked targets while your partner sneaks in for up-close assassinations, bait placement and sabotage is a great way to ramp the chaos factor up to eleven before you’ve even leaped on the back of your buddy’s gyrocopter and begun raining AK fire in from above. If you’re bored of *Far Cry 4*’s slightly mundane objectives and collectible hunting, the sublime co-op is a great way to spice up the experience.

Of course, for those of you averse to co-op, there is a competitive mode – though you might want to think twice about leaping into Battles Of Kyrat. At launch, *Far Cry 4*’s asymmetrical multiplayer suffered from population and sever issues, while these have been mostly cleared up, the experience isn’t as fun as it could or should be. Developed by *Rainbow Six* creators Red Storm Entertainment, it pits two teams of four against one another across a variety of game modes. They are fairly standard fare, tasking well-armed Golden Path warriors to fight back bow-toting Rakshasa mystics that are not only masters of stealth, but able to command the beasts found out in the forests.

Admittedly, it’s a pretty cool idea, and will entertain in short bursts, though the objectives aren’t in any way inspiring. Defend an outpost, deliver Demon Masks and bomb propaganda, it’ll get boring quickly. So many months on from launch, there’s a dedicated player base on the servers, but they have learnt the maps, camping zones and all the tricks to really dominate. For the regular players, it’s clearly a game of attrition now – for the newbie, well, you’d better prepare to get utterly dominated.

*Far Cry 4*’s multiplayer offering is something of a mixed bag then, but it’s highly recommended that you give the co-op side a try. Truth be told, if you’re looking for something to play with a buddy and aren’t interested in *Evolve*, you might be better off giving this a try and setting the world of Kyrat on fire with your explosive – not to mention ridiculous – antics.

# TOP FIVE THINGS YOU ABSOLUTELY NEED TO TRY

GETTING INTO FAR CRY 4 AND DON'T WANT TO ACT THE NOOB? FOLLOW THESE TIPS TO ENSURE YOUR DOMINATION

## MAP EDITOR



It wouldn’t be a *Far Cry* game without a robust map editor, and this is no exception. For those with bags of spare time, a little inspiration, and the drive to pile up loads of elephants, get in there and create some bloody amazing maps for the community to enjoy. As always, this is where some of the most fun is to be had and found in *Far Cry*. Oh, and don’t forget to vote for the maps you like.

## GET ON THE GYROCOPTER



Don’t worry if you’re not driving; the passenger seat of the co-op gyrocopter is awesome fun. Not only do you get a sensational view of Kyrat, but you also get the opportunity to lob grenades at anything stupid enough to move beneath you. Get creative and don’t forget to pack your wingsuit, it’ll help you create some truly insane assaults on enemy territory.

## AVOID OBJECTIVES IN CO-OP



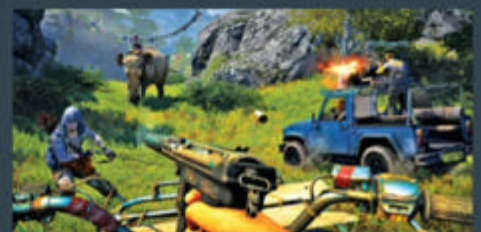
The objectives in *Far Cry 4* are probably the most mundane part of the game. Instead, you’re better off ramping up the difficulty and assaulting the most difficult Outposts, areas and Fortresses. Utilising a variety of stealth and assault tactics – not to mention local wildlife – can create some pretty epic moments that you’ll want for your game clip profile showcase.

## PLAY AS THE RAKSHASA



If you do make the almost certainly suicidal decision to jump into the Battles Of Kyrat multiplayer, try your hand at the Rakshasa soldiers. Not only are they only equipped with a bow, ensuring you need to make every shot count, but they can also turn invisible at a moments notice by crouching. Due to the lack of firepower, it forces you to rethink entire assault strategies – it’s fun while it lasts.

## GET CREATIVE



With a co-op partner introduced to your game, you can just mess around and see what happens, the entire world is open to you. There aren’t many other games that let you create your own fun in this way, so try pissing off a bunch of local soldiers and having an explosive car race across the island. Try swatting each other out of the sky with grenade launchers and gyrocopters. You won’t regret it.

# WORLD OF TANKS INVADES XBOX ONE

There's no disputing World Of Tanks' wild success on Xbox Live, so it was only a matter of time before it rolled out onto Xbox One. We speak with associate publisher producer Marvin Hall to get the first details

## MARVIN HALL

ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER  
PRODUCER

**"It's not just a game, but a worldwide community"**

■ **It's great to hear that *World Of Tanks* will be making its way to Xbox One, but why has it taken so long to make the generation leap?**

We just hit our one-year anniversary a few months after the Xbox One did. We originally decided to develop for the platform with the largest number of users, which was Xbox 360 at the time. *World Of Tanks* is a massively multiplayer action game that requires a large user base to support it. It was obviously the right choice as *World Of Tanks* is the most successful console F2P game to date. Now it's time to take that success to the Xbox One.

■ **What does the power of the Xbox One allow you to do with *World Of Tanks* that you weren't previously able to on Xbox 360?**

Lots! Full 1080p gameplay, higher poly tanks, higher resolution textures, greater than 4X the 360. We are adding all sorts of advanced lighting, even more complex FX, greater soundscapes and more. These heavy metal monsters (tanks) really come to life on Xbox One.

■ **How will *World Of Tanks* on Xbox One be different to the Xbox 360 and PC versions?**

The Xbox 360 version was completely rebuilt and differs

greatly from the PC version. It's a more streamlined and faster experience, designed to be played with a controller from six or more feet away on modern HD TVs. The Xbox One version builds upon that with incredible graphic upgrades, cross platform play, integration with Xbox One features like live Twitch streaming, Game Clips and Game Hubs.

■ **How important was it to Wargaming to let gamers bring all of their progress, tanks and account over to *World Of Tanks* on Xbox One?**

It was a vital aspect to the design and project as players invest a lot of time into *World Of Tanks*. While it would have been easier to not allow this, the right choice was to keep the progress the players have made supporting the game over the past year.

■ **While the graphical boost is appreciated, we often hear from our community that the menu and interface systems can seem**

**confusing, especially for new players. Is there any chance of this being overhauled in future?**

If you've been following the game over the past year then you know we're constantly updating and improving the UI. We've listened to the players and have added quite a few new features and changes to the first time user experience. We've added help screens and training videos for just about everything. Along the way we've added highly requested features like a full map mini map and a filter system for player's tank collection.

■ **What technical hurdles did you have to overcome to let gamers battle cross platform?**

Ask me again once we've released - we're not done quite yet! The two Live networks are separate so we're wiring all the pieces together on our servers. Players will be able to play with their account on both platforms seamlessly and even switch back and forth. We've just added cross-platform voice chat which

was a big player request and that's really important to us.

■ **Will we ever be able to fight against PC players on Xbox One?**

Technically, it's feasible, but we've diverged from the PC game so much it would hardly be fair to our PC brethren. All kidding aside, the PC game is as heavily optimised for that experience as the console version is for playing from your couch, controller in hand, yelling into your headset and hearing the glorious sounds of combat coming from your home theatre system.

■ **What do you attribute to the massive success of *World Of Tanks*? Free-to-play games have had typically had a tough time establishing an audience on Xbox.**

I don't think there's any one reason, otherwise it would just be copied over and over. *World Of Tanks* has been successful



✦ If you've spent the last year playing on Xbox 360, there's no cause for concern. Your account and progress can be ported across.



✦ *World Of Tanks* on Xbox One will give players the opportunity to battle cross-platform, against Xbox 360 players, should they want to.

on multiple platforms and in practically all regions around the globe. Treating the game as a service is a big one. We released over 40 updates of content and features in the first year. We listen to and engage with *World Of Tanks* players in the forums, at player gatherings, conventions and one on one. It's not just a game, but a worldwide community. Free-to-win is another reason. No player can pay to have a gameplay advantage over another player. Monetisation allows for customisation, collectability and speeding up progression. *World Of Tanks* is never in your face about spending money. The option is there for those that want to but if you don't want to you can have the same high stakes action and strategy experience for free, for always.

#### ■ The big question - when can we expect to *World Of Tanks* to release on Xbox One?

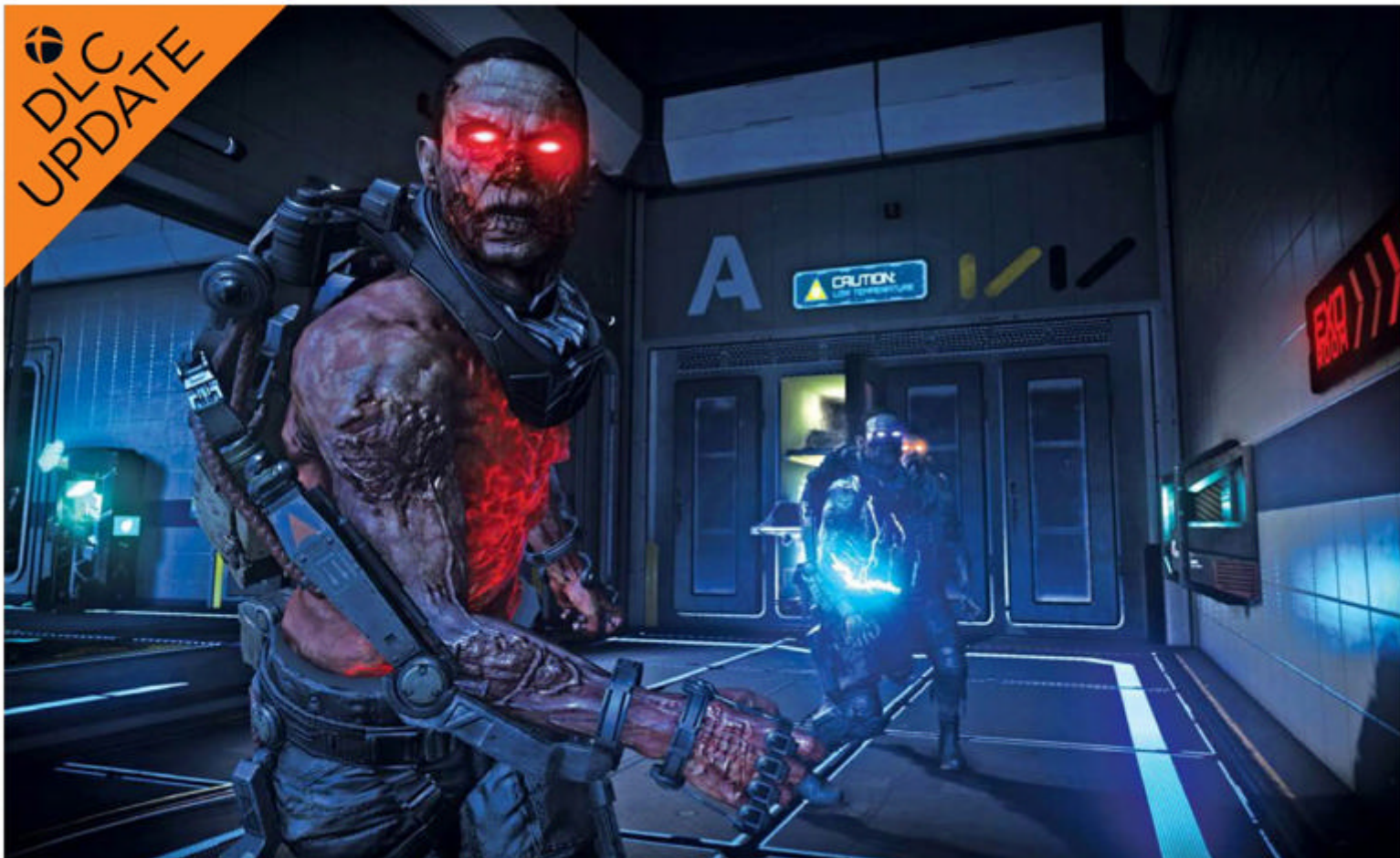
I can answer almost everything but the date. As a developer, they don't trust me not to tell you that it will be sometime this year.

✦ *World Of Tanks: Xbox 360 Edition* is the ridiculously huge free-to-play Xbox Live success story, and it'll be landing on Xbox One later this year.



✦ While the content will be very much the same between versions, the Xbox One edition will benefit from HD tanks, maps and effects.





# CALL OF DUTY ADVANCED WARFARE - HAVOC DLC

Zombies invade the future

Activision is anything but surprising when it comes to *Call Of Duty*. The latest iteration will be announced ahead of E3 to much fanfare, it'll launch around November, and then the DLC onslaught will begin. We aren't knocking the routine, it works – the sales say as much – but something has to be said about the usual quality of these extra maps and modes. Infinity Ward didn't inspire much confidence with its season pass' worth of content for *Ghosts*; that's why Sledgehammer Games has done its best to ensure that the first content drop for *Advanced Warfare* is out of this world.

*Havoc* is one of the best DLC releases *Call Of Duty* has seen in years. Not only does it introduce four fantastic new multiplayer maps to play, but it also ushers in the return of the ever-popular Zombies mode – this time under the guise of Exo Zombies. This

is the first time a studio outside of Treyarch has had a crack at introducing the mode, and it's a fine effort. While Exo Zombies only feature in one map – Outbreak – you'll once again find yourself teaming up with friends to battle back increasingly difficult waves of the living dead.

Initially, it's a little too familiar to cause excitement. Battle further enough into the Atlas research facility, however, and you'll be able to unlock the Exo test station and get yourself locked into one of *Advanced Warfare's* Exo suits. Then the fun truly begins. The zombies come harder and faster than they ever did in *Black Ops*, the challenge ramps up considerably and so does your reliance on the Exo to see you through to the next wave. Once you reach Wave 10 of 15, it's as much about deft manoeuvrability as it is wild headshots and ammo management.

Sledgehammer has also eradicated a few of the more frustrating features of the Treyarch design. You'll no longer be bored waiting between the waves – that's now dedicated to loadout improvement and upgrades – while weapon stations now glow against the background ensuring you're never lost when trying to grab a new weapon against the stress of Exo-equipped zombies charging at you from all directions.

Still, Exo Zombies isn't the only part of this package worth caring about. The four maps are genuinely on par with the already fantastic maps that *Advanced Warfare* launched with. It's all too often that these DLC maps feel rushed and half-arsed, but there's no such complaint here. The arenas are interesting, well designed and challenging across the variety of game modes. In fact two of the maps – Core and

Drift – have every right to be considered *Call Of Duty* classics. They inspire some absolutely ferocious firefights that only the most adept Exo users will be able to dominate.

Overall then, this is a great DLC release that proves the excessive DLC release schedule can work without diluting what made a game great to begin with. Exo Zombies is more thrilling than any co-op mode Treyarch or Infinity Ward has put out in the past – it's constantly kinetic, engaging and skill reliant – while the four maps are immensely well designed, great looking and fun to play. If you're still playing *Advanced Warfare*, there's little reason to not pick this up.



Sledgehammer released its Kevin Spacey-fuelled futuristic shooter last November to mass acclaim and time hasn't diluted the experience. *Advanced Warfare* is still one of the best shooters available on Xbox One.



## MIDDLE-EARTH: SHADOW OF MORDOR – BRIGHT LORD DLC

*Shadow Of Mordor* was undoubtedly one of 2014's biggest surprises, and that's why we've been more than happy to indulge in the adventure-continuing content from Monolith. This final piece of DLC drops you into the ethereal boots of Celebrimbor and further explores the legendary ring-maker's relationship with Sauron. Expect a tougher challenge than ever before, with the Nemesis and AI systems being improved to further test your abilities.



## WWE 2K15 – HALL OF PAIN

Mark Henry was subject to a distressingly tiresome story arc between 2011 – 2013, and now that has come to life in *WWE 2K15* as part of a brand new DLC pack. *Hall Of Pain* charts Henry's rise to dominance as you battle across some of the biggest tournaments, and against the biggest fighters, recreating his insane successes. It's an interesting idea we'd like to see expanded to other big events, but badly executed inside the mediocre *WWE 2K15* and boring Henry storyline.

## HALO NIGHTFALL REVIEW



## A FIGHT NOT WORTH STARTING

*Halo: Nightfall* might have been pitched as the prelude to the ludicrously anticipated *Halo 5: Guardians*; this was supposed to be Microsoft's opportunity to prove it could not only produce gripping original content, but also show that there was more to *Halo* than explosive action.

The resulting series isn't great; in fact, for the most part *The Pillars Of The Earth* director Sergio Mimica-Gezzan and executive producer Ridley Scott manage to make it just about mediocre. *Halo: Nightfall* bears all of the telltale signs and components of a shoddy Syfy original – so expect 98 minutes of stilted action, poorly choreographed fight scenes, cheesy special effects and exposition heavy dialogue that will leave anyone but the most diehard fans lost in space.

As legendary manhunter Jameson Locke (Mike Colter) investigates a terrorist threat on a distant alien world, *Halo: Nightfall* really scrapes the bottom of the live-action barrel, conjuring memories of *Forward Unto Dawn*. But, then again, producing an action-heavy TV series is expensive, so what were we really expecting? *Halo: Nightfall* fails to offer any real glimpses into *Halo 5*, whilst simultaneously failing to deliver any substantial live action thrills. This really is only suitable for the mega fans, and even then, you're better off just doing another run through *Halo 2: Anniversary* and re-watching the Terminal videos.

# RECOMMENDED

MUST-PLAY GAMES FROM THE XBOX CATALOGUE

## 10 BEST FANTASY GAMES

ARE YOU SICK OF ALL OF THE SCI-FI FLOODING THE MARKET? GET THESE FANTASY GAMES ON THE GO AND LOSE YOURSELF IN AN AGE LONG FORGOTTEN



### LOST ODYSSEY

Console: Xbox 360

Developer: Mistwalker

Release Date: 2007

If you were looking for a great *Final Fantasy* game last generation, you didn't need to look much further than *Lost Odyssey*. Directed by famed *FF* creator Hironobu Sakaguchi, it took players through the life and adventures of Kaim – a man that lived for a thousand years but has no memory of his past. Set in a world in turmoil as it approaches a magical industrial revolution, this turn-based RPG was relentless in its attempt – and eventual success – to make you cry. Presented over four discs, this is still one of the best Japanese RPGs to come in a very long time.



### FABLE 2

Console: Xbox 360

Developer: Lionhead Studios

Release Date: 2008

*Fable* is one of Microsoft's best exclusive franchises, and it's still bloody wonderful to return to its crowning moment – 2008's *Fable 2*. Set 500 years after the original game, *Fable 2* whisks us away once again to Albion, a land as beautiful as it is dangerous. While some of the mechanics have noticeably dated, there's something pure to be enjoyed from the wealth of moral options presented, and the impact they have on your character and story. Peter Molyneux may have promised (and failed to deliver) the earth and more, but he still managed to release one of the best fantasy games on 360.

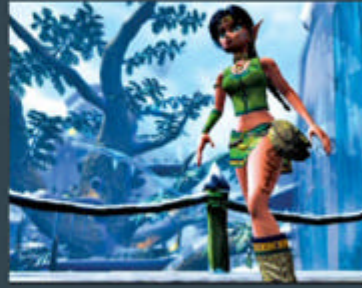


## GAME OF THRONES

A TELLTALE GAME SERIES

Console: Xbox One  
Developer: Telltale Games  
Release Date: 2014

We honestly never expected *Game Of Thrones* to translate so perfectly into Telltale Games' episodic game format. Like *The Walking Dead* and *The Wolf Among Us*, Telltale carved out a space to tell a new adventure within the universe, as the player follows the northern House Forrester following the War of the Five Kings. Westeros is one of the best fantasy settings in TV and fiction, so it's perhaps no surprise that its debut on Xbox One is unmissable for fans of *Game Of Thrones* and fantasy alike.



## KAMEO: ELEMENTS OF POWER

Console: Xbox 360  
Developer: Rare  
Release Date: 2005

Sure, this might not be traditional fantasy, but it's no less impressive. Rare made an impressive debut on the Xbox 360 with *Perfect Dark: Zero*, but it's the other launch title that we still return to – *Kameo: Elements Of Power* – to take control of elf princess Kameo as she attempts to banish her evil sister Kalus and the troll king Thorn from a beautiful land ripe with adventure. It's as you explore this fantasy land, and take control of ten elemental warriors, that you realise *Kameo* is something of an underrated 360 gem.



## THE ELDER SCROLLS V: SKYRIM

Console: Xbox 360  
Developer: Bethesda  
Release Date: 2011

For many years now, Tamriel has proven to be one of the most incredible lands to explore on Xbox – but never has that been truer than with the sensational open-world RPG *Skyrim*. Bethesda had a lot to live up to, following *Oblivion* and *Fallout 3*, but the studio somehow managed to blow our expectations out of the water. *Skyrim* really gives you room to breathe, to define your character and place in an incredible setting just waiting for you to leave your mark on its history. Four years on, this is still the RPG to beat.



## THE WITCHER 2: ASSASSINS OF KINGS

Console: Xbox 360  
Developer: CD Projekt RED  
Release Date: 2012

If you own an Xbox One, there's a fairly strong chance you're feverishly excited about leaping into *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt*. Word to the wise: play *The Witcher 2: Assassins Of Kings* first. CD Projekt RED has created a lore and history heavy world, and while you'll still have fun, if you want to understand what's going on, you need to start here at the very least. Thankfully, *The Witcher 2* is a pretty incredible game. It's a tightly-paced, well-structured RPG that will have any and all fantasy fans begging for more by the end.



## DRAGON AGE: INQUISITION

Console: Xbox 360  
Developer: BioWare  
Release Date: 2014

BioWare did a pretty sensational job of setting a new benchmark for fantasy universes with *Dragon Age: Inquisition*. If you're into dragons, swords, dragons, magic and, obviously, dragons, then what are you doing? Go and get this installed already. As to be expected with a BioWare release, the character customisation options are robust, and the scope for diving into the world through conversations and side-quests is huge. The combat is also greatly improved over the previous games, making this the perfect starting point for fantasy fans.



## DARK SOULS

Console: Xbox 360  
Developer: From Software  
Release Date: 2011

*Dark Souls* definitely isn't for everyone. This tough-as-nails action-RPG has you trawling through dank dungeons and tight corridors against enemies so crazy hard it'll have you introducing your controller to the wall. Probably several times. It's time to invest in a padded cell, is what we're saying. But that isn't to say *Dark Souls* isn't worthy of your time, especially for those that love to go hunting for lore and exploring every inch of interesting fantasy worlds. Lordran may look bland on the surface, but those willing to sacrifice the time and energy will find an experience quite unlike any other waiting.



## DRAGON'S DOGMA

Console: Xbox 360  
Developer: Capcom  
Release Date: 2012

Daunting is pretty much the only way to describe *Dragon's Dogma*. It's the sort of game that only springs to life when you've sunk an embarrassing amount of hours into learning its nuances, levelling up, and exploring its lush, ambitious world. Despite being overlooked upon release in 2012, it's proven to be much more of a long-term experience, and one of the best games to come from Capcom in a good long while. Think *Devil May Cry* meets *Shadow Of The Colossus*, with just a little hint of *Monster Hunter* thrown in for good measure – if that doesn't get you excited, we don't know what will.



## ODDWORLD: STRANGER'S WRATH

Console: Xbox  
Developer: Oddworld  
Inhabitants  
Release Date: 2005

Okay, this might be the strangest entry in this list of fantasy games you absolutely have to play – but who can honestly say they aren't interested in romping through *Oddworld's* undeniably quirky world as a bounty hunter in search of pockets full of Moolah? *Stranger's Wrath* released just ahead of the Xbox 360 and was mostly overlooked, but with a crazy 'live-ammunition' system and clever puzzle mechanics, this was one fantasy FPS that tried to break the mould.



## NEXT ISSUE

# Final Fantasy XV

Can Square Enix get its premier franchise back on track after getting lost in a lightning storm? Join us as we put the stunning Final Fantasy XV through its paces



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